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MAKERS OF MODERN INDIAN RELIGION

IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Torkel Brekke

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Introduction

During the nineteenth century there took place a complete transformation of Indian religions. It was a transformation characterized by two distinct levels of change. On the one hand, there was a fundamental conceptual shift among Indians who were exposed to English language and culture, which crystallized religious communities with sharp boundaries and distinct histories. On the other hand, the emerging feeling of religious-communal identity motivated religious and lay leaders to work in the interests of their communities. This study addresses both of these interrelated developments—the conceptual change and the application of the new ideas to political discourse; the construction and the politics of religious identity—and each of the three parts of the work is accordingly organized into two chapters.

It is important to state from the outset that this discussion of the politics of religion is not about how religion was used in the struggle against colonialism in any direct sense. Although an analysis of the impact on indigenous leaders of the world view of colonial power is often necessary, the primary focus of the study is on local dialogues and disputes. It is not only concerned with debates about the relationship between indigenous South Asian religions, it is also about attempts to create internal unity and religious and cultural homogeneity and strength, attempts to define religious nations or communities.

The book is built around three case-studies which examine religious leaders from very different milieus: the Hindus of Bengal, the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, and the Śvetāmbara Jains of western India. Why these three? Why not Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, or Christians? The three religions selected constitute an interesting collection because they are linked in two somewhat peculiar, but nevertheless significant, ways. First, in the minds of the leaders themselves these three traditions were intimately linked through their history. According to Western indology Hinduism, Buddhism,

and Jainism had common origins. Buddhism and Jainism were branches that had sprung from the great tree of Hinduism. In a significant sense, Buddhists and Jains were Hindus. Together these three traditions constituted the indigenous Indian religions. Secondly, they all became linked in the middle of the 1890s through personal contacts. In August 1893 there was a Parliament of Religions in Chicago with representatives from all over the world. The bonds that were established between Swami Vivekānanda (1863–1902), the self-proclaimed representative of the Hindus and indeed of all India, Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933), the Sinhalese Buddhist delegate, and Virchand R. Gandhi (1864–1901), the envoy of the great Jain teacher Ātmārāmjī, are particularly interesting. They, with their co-workers and helpers, were pivotal protagonists in the making of modern Indian religion. As will become clear, the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain representatives were all committed to the idea of their three respective traditions as the true Indian religions, and both Dharmapāla and Gandhi were influenced by Vivekānanda, who was more than happy to assume the role of head of the great Indian family.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN INDIA

In Brahminical ideology a person's religious identity is linked to his or her position in the world of *dharma*. Dharma is the key concept of Indian social philosophy. It refers both to the natural order of the cosmos and to the individual duties and privileges according to this order. There are three factors determining the position of an individual. First, there is the affiliation of class (*varṇa*) and/or caste (*jāti*). Secondly, a person's current position in the ideal life-cycle (*āśrama*) defines their status in terms of age.[1] Finally, there is gender. A person is born into a certain social category and moves through different stages from birth to death. In other words religious identity overlaps with social identity.

The Brahminical ideal of male religious identity based on *varṇa* and *āśrama* was challenged by the tradition of religious wanderers and renouncers (*śramaṇas*), like Buddhism and Jainism, and by the Hindu devotional sects which constituted the bhakti movement.

[1] Olivelle (1993), 183–4. The āśrama system is meant exclusively for males of the top three *varṇa*, but in practice applies only to Brahmins (p. 188).

This movement of devotional religion, which first appeared in south India in the seventh century and was established in northern Indian culture only in the thirteenth century, centred on the personal relationship between devotee and deity. The tradition of renouncers and the devotional sects had virtually no common theological or philosophical ground and there were in fact often tensions between their followers where they co-existed. And yet a common and fundamental position of these traditions was their insistence that religious identity be radically separated from social identity. In these movements religion was a matter of choice and personal striving. Religious identity was about belonging to a group of like-minded people whose religious duties and privileges all accrued from their personal choices and abilities and not from their social position. In order to achieve membership of a religious community one had to undergo the ritual of initiation. This type of ritual was, however, not the right or privilege of a social group like the life-cycle rituals of Brahminical society. In order to be accepted an individual could in theory come from any class or caste, and be of either gender. He or she had to be an adult suited for life in the community, but most importantly he or she had to wish to join the group and actively approach it. Religion became a matter of choice.

Thus, traditional Indian religious identity was split into two broad types. An individual was born into a family, a hereditary profession, a *jāti*, and a *varṇa*, although the last category does not seem to have had a very great significance for non-Brahmins in everyday life in spite of its prominence in classical literature. With these basic affiliations came a religious identity which was taken more or less for granted and expressed, for Brahmins at least, through the everyday rituals prescribed by the texts called *Gṛhyasūtras* and *Dharmasūtras*. (The classical texts dealing with rituals were of three types: *Śrautasūtras*, which describe the major public ceremonies, *Gṛhyasūtras*, which describe the domestic rites, and finally the *Dharmasūtras*, which detail rituals and duties according to *dharma* and social status.) The religious outlook and practices entailed were ascribed by birth and so much part of a person's social being that the label religion perhaps implies too much autonomy. In contrast, at different stages in Indian history an individual could, at least in theory, choose to join one of the heterodox traditions or one of the sects within the Hindu fold. Such membership was not ascribed by birth; it was achieved through

initiation. Religion was personal, defined by the chosen guru and his line of transmission, and expressed through devotion and obeisance to him.

But a religion of choice in which members formed a community in their devotion to, say, Śiva or Kṛṣṇa was susceptible to the process that Max Weber called routinization. Some sects accepted conjugal unions between their men and women and accepted children as part of the sect. Sectarian religion became hereditary. The next step would be to stop accepting members from outside and then the sect would have been transformed into a caste. For instance, this is, to all intents and purposes, what happened to the community of Vīraśaivas or Liṅgāyats of southern India.

An example from northern India may further illuminate the relationship between sect and other socio-religious affiliations like caste. E. A. H. Blunt of the Indian Civil Service did an investigation of the castes in the United Provinces during his work there in the early part of the twentieth century. He gives four examples of what he calls sectarian castes: the *Atiths*, the *Goshains*, the *Sadh*, and the *Bishnoi*.[2] The ambiguities of such groups were often commented on by British administrators. In 1885 J. C. Nesfield gave the following description of the status of the *Goshains*: 'It is a caste, because it extends itself by natural increase from within; and it is an order, because it admits new adherents from without and because many of its members are celibates.'[3] Blunt observed that some of the customs of these sectarian castes pointed to their origins as groups of renouncers. For instance, at least some did not burn their dead, but threw them in the Ganges or buried them. In orthodox Hinduism the custom of burning the dead is a natural extension of the deceased person's life as a householder: it is the last Hindu sacrament (*saṃskāra*). Practically all Hindus are cremated and normally the chief mourner takes the domestic fire of the dead, leads the funerary procession, and lights the fire. Renouncers, however, are not burnt. Their domestic fires are extinguished when they leave the world behind, and the sacrament is not part of their ritual. Many sects originated as communities of renouncers committed to the ideal of religious salvation, often through devotion (*bhakti*), and they did not completely dispose of the symbolism of the religion of salvation when they became

[2] Blunt (1931), 132–4. [3] *Brief View of the Caste System … 1882*, 84.

hereditary groups. Moreover, such groups would sometimes institutionalize a priesthood that would take over some of the normal functions of Brahmins.

A third, distinct type of religious identity must be mentioned defined by a person's affiliation to a guru, and expressed through the devotion and rituals directed towards him. The three religious identities were administered by different types of person, whose positions entailed authority limited to a defined sphere of religious life. The family priest (*purohita*) gave initiation into the social and religious world of the Brahmin, the family guru (*kulaguru*) gave initiation into the social and religious world of the sectarian religion, and the guru gave initiation into the chosen personal religion of salvation.[4]

THE NEED FOR A NEW TYPE OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

The Indian leaders and intellectuals who sought to construct a Hindu identity that would be the basis of an Indian nation had to relate to this multifaceted and intersecting array of social and religious identities. An alternative and opposite reaction of religious leaders of the nineteenth century was to reject everything modern and call for the return to an idealized Brahminical order. This was typical of Hindi-speaking central northern India, where Brahminical culture was strong, and it was the stamp of many societies emphasizing their devotion to the Vedas and to Hindu *dharma*. The attempts at reformulation that issued from Calcutta were more realistic and perhaps more mature. This was probably due both to the very long period of Anglo–Indian contact in Bengal and to the extraordinary individual Bengalis who took on the task of moulding a modern Indian religious identity. How, then, did these religious leaders relate their new ideas and definitions to traditional forms of religious identity? If this can be answered, so might two of the other central questions of this study: how did the idea of religion change during the nineteenth century?, and what is modern Indian religion?

[4] However, this is complicated by the fact that in a Brahmin family with a *kulaguru*, the *purohita* performs all the rites of passage except initiation—*upanayana*. The *upanayana* is left to the *kulaguru*.

The distinction between ascribed and achieved religious identities becomes significant when it is seen in conjunction with questions of entitlement to membership of religious communities. Membership of a religious community may be exclusive to certain parts of society or inclusive in the sense that no restrictions on social affiliation is made on the members. The two variables, ascribed/achieved and exclusive/inclusive, make for four different membership policies, illustrated by the following examples.

As previously said, Brahmin religious identity is ascribed by birth and exclusive to certain parts of society. Membership of the dominant Sinhalese Buddhist Saṃgha, the Siyam Nikāya, has traditionally been achieved through an initiation ceremony, but membership has been exclusive to the land-owning Goyigama caste. In the devotional sects membership has typically been achieved through initiation and completely inclusive in the sense that membership is open irrespective of caste and gender. The fourth type—ascribed by birth and inclusive of all members of society—was what the Indian leaders of the nineteenth century wished to promote, an ideology espoused by the Hinduism of Swami Vivekānanda and the Buddhism of Anagārika Dharmapāla. This was a truly modern type of religious identity, one that was thought capable of forming the basis for a national identity. It was said by these leaders that birth made everybody within a community a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Jain. Such assertions were programmatic expressions of nationalism. The new type of religious identity was a means to creating solidarity and, ultimately, national uplift.

To return to the question of how new ideas were reconciled with tradition, it is important to emphasize the difference in starting point between the Hindus on one side and the Buddhists and Jains on the other. Taking a simplified view of Indian religions—a view that admittedly has been the object of relevant criticism, especially from anthropologists—the only 'real' Buddhists and Jains were the monks and nuns of the Saṃgha. For the Buddhist and Jain leaders who wanted to create a religious identity that was ascribed and inclusive, the members of the Saṃgha were the natural point of reference: everybody should be like a monk or a nun. Most radical in this respect was probably Sinhalese Buddhism, where the traditional line separating monk from layman was very sharp; Gujarati Jainism, in contrast, had incorporated a number of

interstitial roles since the Middle Ages and the difference between Saṃgha and laity was rather one of degree. The case was more problematic for the protagonists of a Hindu identity that was to be all-embracing, inclusive, and ascribed by birth. Throughout Indian history there have appeared movements that rejected the orthodox ideas of religion and society, but in order to challenge successfully the Brahminical tradition, such groups needed first to question the very basis of the Brahminical position. Questions of religious identity have always been intertwined with questions of social and religious authority. This was also the case in the nineteenth century.

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN INDIA

Religious authority rests on the sacredness of the texts belonging to the revealed Vedic truth (*śruti*) and the orthodox tradition handed down through generations of teachers and pupils (*smṛti*). Manu, the legendary author of the best known treatise on *dharma*, says that the authority of the *śruti* and the *smṛti* is *amīmāṃsya*, which means that it is not to be reasoned or questioned.[5] In the Brahminical tradition only the Brahmins are allowed access to the holy texts and the religious tradition that they contain. It is better for a Vedic preceptor to die with his knowledge than to impart it to an unworthy recipient, and the person who acquires knowledge of the Vedas from a Vedic preceptor or a pupil without permission goes to hell, continues Manu.[6]

Religious rights are exclusive and hereditary, but a Brahmin boy does not have access to the Veda and their timeless truths before he has undergone certain rituals. The most important of these initiatory rituals is the *upanayana* or the investiture with the sacred thread.[7] This is the major life-cycle ritual (*saṃskāra*) of the three top *varṇa* of India. The initiation gives a Brahmin boy the right and the duty to study the Veda and perform rituals.[8] Boys of the warrior (*Kṣatriya*) and merchant (*Vaiśya*) classes must, in theory,

[5] Manu 2.10. [6] Manu 2.113, 2.116.

[7] J. Gonda has argued against the use of the term initiation for the *upanayana* ritual because of the initial meaning of the Latin term. See Gonda (1991), 510–16. However, other writers have stressed the similarities between initiation into age groups and into secret societies and religious groups. See for instance Gennep (1960), 114 (65–116).

[8] See for instance *Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra*, 1.14–15; *Gautama Dharmaśāstra*, 1.1. I have used the editions and translations by Manmath Nath Dutt.

also undergo the investiture with the sacred thread, although some years later than Brahmin boys. This initiation separates the top *varṇas* from the rest of society. A male member of any of these *varṇas* who is not initiated with the sacred thread before a certain age becomes, again in theory, a *vrātya*, which means that he is degraded from the society of the Aryans.[9]

From the initiation of the young Brahmin comes the term *adhikāra*.[10] This word refers to the authority and competence as well as the obligation and responsibility to perform Vedic rituals which is a corollary of Brahminhood. This authority belongs to the conceptual world of *dharma*, where the ordered universe is upheld by ritual and social distinction and the different classes of people have different rights and duties. The hierarchy of *dharma* corresponds to the hierarchy of authority. One can talk of a differentiation of authority (*adhikārabheda*) according to the rights and duties that are delegated throughout the cosmos. It is the Veda itself that guarantees the right differentiation. Conversely, the idea of differentiation, or even different levels of teaching for different classes of beings, has been employed to explain apparent internal inconsistencies in the Veda and sometimes within the larger tradition of the six orthodox philosophical schools. The Veda always remains the ultimate source. For the defenders of the Brahminical tradition, rightful access to the Veda cannot be achieved by worldly means alone such as a powerful intellect or strong motivation for liberation (*mokṣa*). In the end it is the Veda itself that conveys and bestows the competence needed in order to understand Vedic matters.

The question of religious authority and obligation is an important focus for an understanding of the transformation in religion that took place in India during the nineteenth century. Swami Vivekānanda denounced traditional ideas of authority as the product of Brahmin selfishness. However, the old idea of differentiation of competence, authority, and even of taste (*ruci*), became an essential tool when he tried to set up organizing principles on which to base a new religious world view which necessarily had to include all peoples and religions. Truth is one, but sages have formulated

[9] Manu 2.39. P. S. Jaini draws a parallel between the *Vrātyas*, the dissident or renegade Aryans of the Veda, and the later *Śramaṇas* who opposed the traditional institutions of Vedic religion. Jaini (1970), 47.

[10] The following exposition of *adhikāra* relies on the work of W. Halbfass, in particular Halbfass (1992), 66–74.

it differently, he said, echoing a traditional hermeneutic stance of teachers belonging to the Vedānta school, as well as the universalistic spirit of religious leaders throughout the world epitomized, according to Vivekānanda, in his guru Ramakrishna. Vivekānanda believed that people's choice of religious affiliation was, apart from a considerable degree of historical conditioning, an expression of their individual capacities and inclinations, while the individual of true religious insight was bound to transcend such petty allegiances and look for the universal truth hidden in all religious systems.

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Part I

HINDUS

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I

Defining Hinduism

The development of a new Hindu identity asserted the individual's right to unmediated access to the religious culture of India. The main character in this process was the Bengali Hindu Swami Vivekānanda. Vivekānanda professed what he called Advaita Vedānta, a philosophical system founded by the great teacher Śaṅkara around 800 CE. This is a branch of Hinduism that stresses the non-duality (*advaita*) of reality and claims that the only thing that really exists is Brahman, the Absolute. Everything, including the self (*ātman*), is really identical with this Absolute and it is only illusion (*māyā*) caused by ignorance (*avidyā*) that makes us perceive them as individual entities separate from the Absolute. Vivekānanda sought to create a new basis for national unity and a religious ethic that would provide an initiative for charitable work among the poor of India. He had grown up in Calcutta and received a good English education. Later in life, many years were spent lecturing and teaching in the US and Europe. His beliefs and attitudes were influenced by the Western ideas of history that gradually replaced indigenous perceptions of the past during the nineteenth century. Vivekānanda's older contemporary Bankimchandra Chatterji, the great Bengali writer, made an important contribution to the formulation of a new idea of religion. In a rhetorical and philosophical work on *dharma* called *The Essence of Dharma* (*Dharmatattva*), he comes to the conclusion that 'dharma is a true synonym of religion'. This conclusion is significant because it sums up a conceptual development whereby Indian elites of the nineteenth century, especially Bengalis, came to perceive religion as a separate aspect of social life. It was a development that not only constituted the basis for Vivekānanda's world view but, to some extent, influenced all the religious leaders described in this book.

In his religious reformism Vivekānanda struggled to fuse two mutually exclusive ideals: the ideal of renunciation and the ideal of charitable work. He insisted that every Hindu should take

responsibility for the religion and culture that was their birthright, but which had been monopolized by the Brahmins. However, this did not imply renunciation of the social world, it meant social activism and involvement combined with detachment from one's actions and their results. This fusion resulted in an ethic of this-worldly asceticism, typical of the spirit that animated many South-Asian religious leaders of the period.

A NEW IDEA OF HISTORY

The idea of history as perceived in modern European thought is the result of specific philosophical developments. Before the colonial period, other societies had other ideas of the past. The model exported from Europe to most other parts of the world during the time of European expansion may be called historicism: the idea that every nation or civilization develops through time in a way that can be reconstructed objectively by careful scrutiny of historical documents (rather than the belief that it is possible to identify laws, rhythms, or trends that underlie the evolution of history, a belief condemned by Popper among others).

During the nineteenth century historicism as a world view permeated the thinking of many South-Asian leaders through Western education. Conceptions of time and the practice of historiography and archaeology were constitutive of both Hindu and Muslim nationalisms from the late nineteenth century.[1] Anagārika Dharmapāla spoke incessantly about the history of Buddhism in relation to the history of other religions and civilizations, and he often used the work of Western scholars to corroborate his arguments. Jain leaders spoke of the history of Jainism, and scholars like Jacobi and Max Müller were favourite points of reference in their discussions. Vivekānanda read the history of Rome and Greece, of Egypt, of the French Revolution, of modern Europe, of classical India, of the Mughals, and of Buddhism. His views were often based on historical arguments, and, as T. Raychaudhuri writes, his statements on history drew upon a fantastic range of evidence from the records of many civilizations.[2]

[1] Van der Veer (1994), esp. ch. 5.
[2] Raychaudhuri (1988), 226.

History was accessible not only through books. Equally important for many religious leaders were the spots on the Indian map where history surfaced, especially the history of their particular creed, its church, and above all its founder. Therefore, negotiation for a place in the history of India also became a negotiation for control of places with particular historical importance for the community. Anagārika Dharmapāla spent most of his adult life struggling to take possession of Bodh Gayā, the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment, and to establish Buddhism in the land of its origin. In the same spirit Vijaya Dharma Sūri attempted to establish a Jain centre at Pāvā, where the founder of Jainism died.

The people described in this book—whether from Bengal, Gujarat, or Sri Lanka—all shared in a particular perception of history. It was exported from Europe and gained currency among the anglicized elites. This took place roughly between 1800 and 1870. A brief look at the ideas of history contained in contemporary historical writings in Indian languages—primarily Bengali—may shed some light on the changing views.

The Governor-General Marquess Wellesley established Fort William College in 1800 in order to teach the officials of the East India Company Indian languages and make them fit for work in a new and strange environment. His younger brother, Colonel Arthur Wellesley, who would become Duke of Wellington and the unrivalled hero of post-Napoleonic England, had ruled Mysore from 1799, and the ambitious siblings were determined to combine a resolute policy towards their enemies with an enlightened rule over the Indian people. When he set out from Portsmouth in the summer of 1796, Arthur Wellesley brought with him an impressive little library on India that contained works on the history of the subcontinent, descriptions of Bengal, and accounts of earlier Indian campaigns, as well as grammars and dictionaries in both Persian and Bengali.[3] In other words, knowledge of the subjugated territory and the culture of its population was seen as a primary condition for successful administration, and it was only natural that the Governor-General should work to institutionalize such learning.

[3] Guedalla (1997), 54–6.

The new college, situated in Calcutta, needed teaching material, and Indian scholars were asked to write the appropriate texts. The first three books in narrative prose solicited by the school were books on Indian history. One of these was the *Rājābali* written in 1808 by Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, who taught Sanskrit at the college. Vidyalankar's book was, as the name suggests, a history of the kings who had ruled India from the very beginning of its civilization.[4] The author painstakingly ordered the history according to the traditional Hindu categories of time—*kalpas* and *yugas* of phenomenal length—and explained the chronology of the eras of different kings. It was always the pious observation of universal order and duties that made rulers powerful in India and it was likewise the breach of *dharma* that led to the overthrow of kings and the decline of dynasties. However, in Vidyalankar's line of monarchs we find characters from the great epic *Mahābhārata* alongside the historical kings of Magadha and the Delhi Sultans. The legendary figure of Yudhiṣṭhira, hero of the *Mahābhārata*, is treated in the same way as the historical Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Mythological figures vie with historical monarchs for a place in Indian history and their rule is assessed by the same traditional criterion of religious righteousness.

Vidyalankar's attitude towards the past was fundamentally different from that of European historiography. His commissioned book, like other works on history by Indian authorities at the time, was a Puranic history, as P. Chatterjee calls it.[5] In other words, his ideas of history and geography were essentially those of the *Purāṇas* or *Dharmaśāstras*, the classical Indian texts that describe the order of the world and the cyclical rhythm of time as well as the place of men and gods in the cosmos. The authority of the *śruti* and the *smṛti* traditions was unquestionable according to orthodox Hindu ideology, and for Vidyalankar, writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century under the auspices of the East India Company, their laws had still to be observed.

From Vidyalankar it is a huge step to the anglicized historians writing in Indian languages a few decades later.[6] Before 1875 the historiography of Bengal consisted in the translation of English

[4] For Vidyalankar's idea of history I rely on Chatterjee (1996), 5 ff., and Guha (1988), 28 ff.

[5] Ibid.

[6] For the regional development of historical writing in Assamese, Gujarati, Hindi, and Bengali, see the articles in Banerjee (ed.) (1987).

books; the Bengali historians who tried to write independent works tended not to possess an adequate understanding of the principles of historical research.[7] Works by Stewart and Mill were of particular importance to Indian historians in this early period, and a little later the histories of Elphinstone and Marshman exerted considerable influence. The works of English historians were necessarily the standards for emulation, but their importance also lay in the fact that Indian historians soon engaged in a struggle to repossess the history that they saw as their own. In 1857–8, for instance, Nilmani Basak published a three-volume history of India in Bengali in order, the author stated, to remedy the defects of English studies of Indian history.[8] The indigenous elite wanted to set their own reading—or to use a now popular word, their own construction—of Indian history against that of the colonial rulers. Especially from the second half of the nineteenth century, they saw the appropriation of Indian historiography as part of a nationalist struggle for power. 'We must have a history!' Bankimchandra said in 1880, implying that the ability to decide one's own history is a precondition for deciding one's future.[9]

The transition in world view from the so-called Puranic, or purely legendary, to the historicist was neither a politically neutral nor a smooth affair. The earliest Western historiography in India was again the work of the East India Company. It was the construction of a body of knowledge necessary for the effective collection of revenue. In a sense, then, Western historiography was a tool for the occupation and exploitation of a foreign territory; even under its guise as a well-meaning bestowal of enlightening knowledge on opaque native minds, the history taught by the British was a tool of power, R. Guha says.[10] Through the first decades of the nineteenth century English education spread rapidly, making the past inaccessible to anglicized Indians in any other mode than the European historicist variety. Who were the elites that received this new world view?

[7] Mukhopadhyay (1987), 35. [8] Guha (1988), 36.

[9] Bankimchandra quoted in Chatterjee (1996), 3.

[10] For an interesting discussion of historiography as a political tool in Bengal, see Guha (1988), 13 ff.

ANGLICIZED ELITES—'THE GOOD PEOPLE'

The transformations in religion of this period went hand in hand with unprecedented developments in the constitution of Indian society, the most important of which bypassed caste. Whereas social status had been a matter of birth in traditional society, there emerged a high status social group to which membership could be acquired irrespective of birth, at least in theory. This group was called the *bhadralok*, literally 'the good people'. S. N. Mukherjee writes: 'The *bhadralok* was a de facto social group, which held a common position along some continuum of the economy, enjoyed a style of life in common and was conscious of its existence as a class organised to further its ends. The *bhadralok* status was not ascriptive; it had to be acquired.'[11]

How was status acquired? First of all through English education. The Orientalist ideals that appreciated the value of Indian education, the ideals that had guided the activities at Fort William College from its establishment in 1800, were essentially a heritage of the eighteenth century. They were contested by growing demands for Bengalis to receive English education. In Calcutta the British were divided on the question of whether the indigenous population should cultivate classical Indian traditions of learning, or be educated after purely English standards. However, under the governor-generalship of William Bentinck, from 1828, the Anglicist view became dominant.[12] This view was famously expressed in Lord Macauley's confident assertion that one shelf in a Western library would contain more valuable knowledge than the whole literary production of the East. There had been appointed a General Committee of Public Instruction under the Charter of the East India Company in 1823 with the dual task of encouraging the 'learned natives of India' and promoting knowledge of Western science among Indians.[13] The committee was seen to have failed in its promotion of English learning and this failure, and the subsequent critique from the Court of Directors of the East India Company, was an important part of the background for the debate between Orientalists and Anglicists.

[11] Mukherjee (1976), 227. [12] McCully (1940), 66–7.
[13] Baumfield (1998), 194–212, esp. 196–7.

From the 1820s English education had become the key to a career in business, law, medicine, or administration. The Brahmins and *Kāyasthas*[14] rapidly acquired proficiency in the new language of administration in the same way as they had learnt Persian under the Mughal rulers. The intellectuals of Bengal did not constitute a group separated from other elites, and wealth was also a reliable ticket for admission to the *bhadralok*.

But the status acquired from English education or success in business was ambiguous. Members of the Bengali *bhadralok*, like the indigenous elites of many of the colonized territories of the world, were excluded from positions of real power in the British institutions of government. The exclusion of the intelligentsia from higher posts in the colonial bureaucracy was pronounced in India and it led to their comparatively rapid and assertive politicization. Nevertheless, a new class of thoroughly anglicized Indians came into being and at the end of the nineteenth century European ideas of history constituted the epistemological framework within which the discourse of religious communities and their place in India was carried out. What did these ideas consist of?

Several interlinked trends of thought shaped the idea of history held by Indian intellectuals during the last decades of the nineteenth century. First of all, they perceived societies as definite entities that evolved through time driven by inherent forces of change. In Europe Darwin and Wallace had separately suggested the theory of evolution by natural selection. Spencer advocated ideas of evolution in society and history. Marx talked about India as 'a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium' and that consequently was incapable of change and always an easy prey for more dynamic peoples.[15] Fossil evidence for human evolution was piling up from the 1850s and the public—excepting the last defenders of tradition and religion—were ready for ideas of natural selection, often reinterpreted as healthy competition and progress, both in nature and in society. In Bengal, Bankimchandra Chatterji was profoundly influenced by Auguste Comte's ideas of the social organism and its development.[16]

[14] The *Kāyasthas* were the class or caste of Bengali Hindus that traditionally served as clerks.

[15] Stokes (1978), 20. See also Inden (1990), 134–7.

[16] Haldar (1989), 134.

The idea of evolution also influenced the new ideas of religion. With deep roots in the German idealist tradition there emerged in Europe a branch of religious studies opposed to sociology and empiricism. Windelband, Rickert, and Droysen were searching for a methodological basis on which to legitimize the autonomy of historical and philological disciplines. In German universities reason was applied to the holy texts of Christianity as never before. By making hermeneutics a universal method not limited to the study of the Bible, Schleiermacher had paved the way for Dilthey's philosophy of humanistic sciences—'der anderen Hälfte des globus intellectualis' as Dilthey called them.[17]

Vivekānanda's ideas of history and civilization were the typical nineteenth-century mix of German idealist thought and English empiricism. He looked at a race or nation as a definite entity with a certain extension in time and space and with a certain history. The members of the nation all took part in the life of the whole. It was the idea of the social organism of Spencer and Comte. This conception of society went hand in hand with ideas of historical change according to which societies developed through realizing inherent potential.

Vivekānanda's view of history borrowed a teleological touch from the German tradition. He believed that every human race had its peculiarities and its role to fulfil in the life of the world, just as every individual human being had his own direction in life. This was the single most important idea of history in Vivekānanda's thought and it was repeated again and again in his speeches and writings: India had a role to play in the life of human civilization as a whole. It constituted the rationale for Vivekānanda's missionary work. He believed India was the world's treasury of religion and spirituality and it was the duty of India to distribute her treasures to the rest of the world. This duty was particularly pressing because in the present era—the sad and corrupted *kali yuga* of Hindu cosmology—most of mankind was lost in the shallow pursuit of material gain and political dominance. However, Vivekānanda was always ready to accept that India needed to learn from the West in the realm of administrative affairs in order to alleviate poverty and to improve communications and education.

[17] Dilthey (1983), 49.

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Among South Asian religious leaders of the nineteenth century, few scholars, if any, had such a profound influence on the conception of religion as Friedrich Max Müller. Max Müller, with his wide network among Indian scholars and his new scientific approach to the Indian textual heritage, was one of the defining influences on Hindu nationalism.[18] Vivekānanda was definitely no exception in this respect: his ideas of what religion was, as well as his beliefs concerning the characteristics of different religions and the relationship between different creeds, owed their basic presuppositions to the Science of Religion established by the great comparative philologist. Vivekānanda read Max Müller's work and constantly referred to the respected scholar on matters of Indian religious history. The two had close contact in England in 1896 and Vivekānanda readily assisted Max Müller in his search for material on his book about Ramakrishna.

Max Müller's fame as a scholar was mostly due to his own efforts: he had a strong sense of responsibility to spread scientific knowledge outside academic circles and, as one biographer has said, he conveyed his views of language and religion with missionary zeal.[19] Max Müller enjoyed a meteoric rise in English society and his wide reputation drew the attention of the public to questions of language and philology. However, his gifts for popularizing had a downside: he was attacked by a number of linguistic scholars for unreliable logic and a romantic rather than scholarly approach to philology.[20]

As a devout Christian, Max Müller saw serious problems in the integration of the new scientific ideals with his own beliefs. The creation of the Science of Religion was an attempt to apply the scientific approach to a field that so far had had largely hostile relations with science. Religion and science were seen by many to be mutually exclusive and Max Müller realized that religion had to yield a lot to science if it were to survive. As already observed, this view was not uncommon at the time.

Max Müller was himself influenced both by the great German idealist heritage and by the more recent trend of evolutionary,

[18] See Van der Veer (2001), ch. 5. [19] Voigt (1967), 2.
[20] Brock and Curthoys (eds.) (1998), 637.

empiricist thinking, and, not unlike Marx in this respect, he tried to fuse these opposed traditions. His new science of comparative religion saw religions as evolving entities. He believed that the key to understanding the essence of a religion was to uncover its origins. In order to do this one needed philological erudition and the ability to grasp the feel of a religion through the material at one's disposal.

Comparison, classification, and ideas of evolutionary development became the scientific ideals in most academic fields during this period. They had formed the basis for Darwin's approach to the species of the natural world, and after the work of Franz Bopp and Rasmus Rask in the first decades of the nineteenth century, they had profoundly influenced the approach to languages among linguists working to reduce the tongues of the world, especially the Indo-European ones, to a single common language spoken before the confusion of Babel. Comparison was the scientific method par excellence. In Max Müller's words, 'all higher knowledge is acquired by comparison, and rests on comparison'.[21] Comparison was the character of scientific research in our age, he continued, which really meant that research was based on the widest evidence available and the broadest inductions possible.

In order to demonstrate the excellence of the new approach to the study of religion, Max Müller compared his method with practice in the field of linguistic research. The great advances in the study of languages proved the necessity of comparison, he believed. He who knows one language, knows none, was the moral of Comparative Philology. The same applied to religion, Max Müller insisted, he who knows one, knows none.[22] In conclusion: 'A Science of Religion, based on an impartial and truly scientific comparison of all, or at all events, of the most important, religions of mankind, is now only a question of time.'[23] With the method of comparison went the idea of evolution. Religions were clearly defined entities with origins in time and space, with specific trajectories of development ending in decline and extinction. 'I certainly am and mean to remain an evolutionist in the study of language, mythology, and religion—that is to say, I shall always try to discover in them an intelligible historical growth', Max Müller said.[24] His lifelong struggle to integrate the ideas of Darwin and

[21] Max Müller (1873), 11–12. [22] Ibid. 16. [23] Ibid. 34–5.
[24] Max Müller (1892), 143.

Spencer with his own religious thinking was a natural part of the spirit of his times. The idea of evolution forced its way into all branches of knowledge, and rejection of the new paradigm was not an option for an open and rational mind.

But there was a price to pay for the advances in the study of religion, and to Max Müller, as to many of his contemporaries, the price was personal and deep-felt. Impartiality and scientific comparison implied that religions were given an ontological status similar to that of phenomena of the natural world. Again, Max Müller used parallels in the study of languages to illustrate his point. Before the work of Humboldt, Bopp, and Grimm everybody believed that Hebrew was the original, revealed language, sent down from heaven, he said. Had there been any loss now that this philological somnambulism had disappeared? Had our interest and love for languages diminished because we knew more about their history and nature? Similarly, would our feelings for religion change with the application of scientific methods?[25] Max Müller's questions were not purely rhetorical, they had real existential meaning for him as a Christian. With the application of scientific methods religions became profane objects of enquiry. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Vedic religion became species in the class 'Religions'.

Max Müller's comparative method contrasted sharply, then, with the approach that compared Christianity with other religions in order to demonstrate its superiority. This was the tactic of, for instance, his contemporary Sir Charles Trevelyan. In the published lecture *Christianity and Hinduism Contrasted* Trevelyan compared Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism to make a hierarchy in which Hinduism received the most criticism: it was the system which 'has gone furthest in deifying human vice'.[26] On the other side of the scale was Christianity, which was the only religion capable of leading man towards perfection. Trevelyan drew the conclusion from his comparisons that Christianity 'must be of divine origin, and we are bound to promote its universal diffusion in obedience to its founder, Jesus Christ'.[27] Naturally, the obligation was particularly heavy in the Indian Empire where, according to Trevelyan, thugs, thieves, sensualists, and worshippers of Kālī still cultivated their perverse pastimes.

[25] Ibid. 14–15. [26] Trevelyan (1881), 5. [27] Ibid. 8–9.

Not everybody saw a reason to strive for the objective outlook of Max Müller. For many believers, Trevelyan's biased juxtapositions were the only way to compare different religions, a conviction not confined to Christians. Vivekānanda made historical comparisons the core of his arguments about religion. He claimed to make Max Müller's professedly scientific approach his own, but Vivekānanda's comparative view sometimes had more in common with Trevelyan's, although Vivekānanda's way with words was less blunt.

VIVEKĀNANDA, RATIONALITY, AND THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

According to Vivekānanda himself, he had inherited the idea that all religions contain a common core from Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna had—as the unbiased and true mystic that he supposedly was—approached different religions in his quest for truth. However, it was at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago that Vivekānanda encountered the ideas of comparative religion that were to colour not only his own view of religion but also his interpretation of Ramakrishna. What Vivekānanda met in Chicago was Max Müller's Science of Religion, with the overall aim of integrating science and religion and creating a religion of humanity for the future. Comte would, no doubt, have been delighted by many of the lectures delivered. After the Parliament the search for a common essence of religions on which to base the perfect religion of the future was a basic ingredient of Vivekānanda's message. It is quite obvious that Vivekānanda reinterpreted Ramakrishna's life in the light of these ideas and made him look more eclectic than he really was. Indeed, it is doubtful whether either Christianity or Islam had any importance at all in the life of Ramakrishna.[28]

Max Müller chose comparison and evolutionism as his approach to religion after a long period of personal struggle to overcome his gut reaction against the profanation of religion by science. To Vivekānanda comparison was never a neutral activity. It was the first step in his search for feasible principles for a future religion.

[28] See Rosselli (1978), 202. If we are to believe the anti-realist approach of P. Chatterjee, the religion of Ramakrishna as contained in the *Kathāmṛta* tells us less about Ramakrishna than about the fears and anxieties, and indeed the subalternity, of the Calcutta middle class. Chatterjee (1997), 40–68.

From comparison of different religions one could make generalizations, which was the core of scientific method, Vivekānanda said. From generalizations one could approach the common essence of religions and, finally, one could arrive at a religion beyond those examined. However, Vivekānanda's scientific quest was in a sense a sham because he already had the answer to the search: Advaita Vedānta, the religion of the future. Thus, comparative religion also became a device Vivekānanda used to lump all other systems—Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Vedic religion etc.—together as a series of creeds existing on different levels of development and emphasizing different aspects of human existence, but, most importantly, belonging to a lower level of abstraction than Advaita Vedānta. For Vivekānanda comparative religion became a tool for the assertion of the superiority of Vedānta and this would make his ideas on religion highly objectionable to other religious leaders.

Although Vivekānanda's scheme of comparison was biased, both Max Müller and Vivekānanda wished to compare the religious systems of the world in order to reach their common essence. Perhaps this is why Vivekānanda called Max Müller a Vedantist. 'Max Muller is a vedantist of Vedantists. He has, indeed, caught the real soul of the melody of Vedanta, in the midst of all its settings of harmonies and discords—the one light that lightens the sects and creeds of the world, the Vedanta, the one principle of which all religions are only applications.' This quotation illustrates how Vivekānanda's thinking was influenced by his knowledge of different religious traditions. 'The one light that lightens the sects and creeds', is clearly inspired by the Gospels: John 1:9, 'That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world', or Luke 2:32, 'A light to lighten the Gentiles'.[29]

He and Max Müller also had an important aspect of their motivation in common: they felt a personal need to save religion from annihilation by science. Vivekānanda often spoke about how the comparative study of religions was the only means to redeem religion in an age of reason.[30]

In fact, there was remarkable agreement about the status and possible role of religion among intellectuals in Europe, the US, and

[29] *The Complete Works*. iv. 281.
[30] See for instance *The Complete Works*, i. 317.

Asia during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Everybody marvelled at the achievements of science; the basic attitude on which it was seen to build its successes—namely reason—was expected to raise humanity to permanent peace and prosperity. It seemed quite natural to most that religion would have to adjust to science and its mode of thinking. At the Parliament of Religions in Chicago the major theme was the rational religion of the future, when superstition and dogmatism would have been cut away by the razor-blade of reason. This prospect was a fundamental element in the strategy to overcome the conflict between science and religion, which was felt to be pressing; many religious leaders of the day clung to this grand idea in their defence against the onslaught of secularism. Religion should not be discarded as a piece of outdated rubbish, they said. Instead, one should look for a common truth in all religions through rational investigation. After the superfluous had been reasoned away, an adamant core would be left on which to base the universal religion of the future.

The appeal to reason became a hallmark of the debates concerning religion and social reform in Bengal, too. By the latter part of the nineteenth century 'it was no longer possible to debate any issue in Bengal without an appeal to reason and rationality, however contrived the arguments might be', T. Raychaudhuri says.[31] Vivekānanda talked about the necessity of making religion scientific. He was convinced that when mythology, ritual, and other vestigial elements were reasoned away, the essential parts of religion would have greater strength:

> Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion [sic] that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen.[32]

What exactly did Vivekānanda mean by reason? He pointed to two principles that he saw as the essence of modern science and which therefore must be compatible with his scientific religion.

[31] Raychaudhuri (1995), 60.
[32] *The Complete Works*, i. 367.

These were, first, the principle of generalization, which he took to be the core of reasoning, and, secondly, the principle of evolution, which he saw as the basic law of change and development in the universe. In Vivekānanda's view, the system of Advaita Vedānta was compatible with both of these principles. Generalization was represented by the one all-encompassing Brahman of his non-duality (*advaita*), while the law of evolution was found in the doctrine of transmigration: 'Thus we see that the religion of Vedanta can satisfy the demands of the scientific world, by referring it to the highest generalisation and to the law of evolution.'[33]

He explained in detail how these two were satisfied in the system of Vedānta and concluded again that 'we have seen that if any theory of religion can stand the test of modern reasoning, it is the Advaita, because it fulfills its two requirements'.[34]

Vivekānanda was a highly intelligent man. He read widely and he did have a certain insight into contemporary science and philosophy. Nevertheless, the logical tests that Vivekānanda applies to Advaita Vedānta are clearly apologetic. Generalization, or inductive reasoning, is certainly an issue in scientific explanation, but Vivekānanda's proof of the existence of an ultimate principle, Brahman, is clearly unacceptable from the point of view of the logician. Moreover, Vivekānanda's appeal to let reason guide Man in his religious search becomes puzzling when we remember that in his own experience he found reason absolutely inadequate as an instrument to approach truth. His writings are in fact scattered with depreciations of the power of reason as opposed to the power of religious inspiration and personal experience. The appeal to reason had simply become an empty slogan that had to accompany any argument, however contrived the result.

Another substantial influence on the relationship between reason and religion in Bengal was exerted by Rammohan Roy.[35] In 1803–4 Roy published a work in Persian, the *Gift to the Monotheists*, in which he relativized religion and insisted that religious doctrines should be subject to investigation by the intellect.[36] In particular, the propositions and assumptions pertaining to the magical and ritualistic aspects of religion must be tested through

[33] Ibid. 374. [34] Ibid. 376.

[35] The impact of Roy and his religious organization, the Brahmo Samāj, is documented in Kopf (1979).

[36] For an exposition of the work see Killingley (1993), 45 ff.

observation and logical reasoning, he said. This position represented a clear challenge to the devotional theism of Bengali religion in general, as well as to the religious sentiments and practices of his own relatives. Roy did not accept his family's dogmatic Vaiṣṇavism and their devotion to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. As D. Killingley has put it, icon-worship of any kind was a 'last provision' for Roy.[37] In other words, traditional religion could not lead to salvation and was only acceptable as the practice of the weak-minded, who were unable to turn their attention towards an impersonal and otiose deity. Vivekānanda was deeply influenced by the rationalistic tradition of Roy through his close contacts with the Brahmo Samāj, the religious organization founded by Roy in 1828.

'DHARMA IS A TRUE SYNONYM OF RELIGION'

Before returning to Vivekānanda, a look should be taken at the thought of one of his older Bengali contemporaries, Bankimchandra Chatterji. Bankimchandra's writings on religion and *dharma* offer a fascinating view of that fertile pool of ideas created by the contact between the European and Indian intellectual worlds. It was from these concepts that he forged a new Indian socio-religious philosophy, which became the foundation for many later Indian thinkers, including Vivekānanda.

The concept of *dharma* brings us to the core of the discussion of religion and society in India. Many writers have pointed out that its meaning is very hard to pin down. The classical literature on *dharma* has a lot to say about how the world is and even more about how it ought to be. Dharma is both a description of the world and a norm on which to base social life. This double nature of descriptivity and normativity is, perhaps, expressed in Manu's constant intermingling of the indicative and the optative modes of verbs, as suggested by R. Gombrich.[38] In traditional Indian thought *dharma* is a model both of and for the world, according to the anthropologist C. Geertz.[39]

[37] Ibid. 76 ff.
[38] Lecture in Oxford, November 1996. See also Gombrich (1997), esp. 152–4.
[39] Geertz (1993), 93–4.

A much quoted source for an understanding of the word *dharma* is P. V. Kane's monumental study of the *dharmaśāstra*, the science on *dharma*. He concludes that after several transitions of meaning the most prominent significance of the term came to be 'the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of the Āryan community, as a member of one of the castes, as a person in a particular stage of life'.[40] Thus, Kane stresses the importance of duties connected with *varṇa* and *āśrama*. It is important to stress the point that *dharma* had several meanings and that religion—which is a prominent part of its meaning today even among indologists—was at most a secondary connotation of the traditional sense of the word.

Gombrich has pointed to the fact that South Asian languages before the colonial period did not have a term corresponding even approximately to the Western term 'religion' and that the speakers of these languages therefore were less aware of the things that we refer to by that word.[41] In his classic book *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Wilfred Cantwell-Smith pointed out that the word went through a fundamental transformation in the seventeenth century, and this conceptual change was a precondition for the modern perception of religions.[42]

In European history the most radical developments in the idea of religion were results, or rather constituents, of the Enlightenment. Bernard Fontenelle (1657–1757) was among the first European writers to treat religion as a phenomenon to be studied independently of its truth-value. He was convinced that religion should be explained by psychological and historical causes.[43] Of course, this does not mean that up to the seventeenth century scholars had failed to recognize the existence of other peoples with other gods and other rites: Herodotus and Cicero had written about the nature of the gods of different religious systems. The major change that started in the seventeenth century was the shift in the use of the word religion. It became an experience-distant concept, to use Geertz's terminology again,[44] implying the examination of a system of belief, even one's own, from the outside.

[40] Kane (1990), i. 3.

[41] Gombrich (1997), 149–50. Similar arguments have been made about Hinduism in Frykenberg (1997), Thapar (1997), and Stietencron (1997). See also Asad (1993).

[42] Cantwell-Smith (1963).

[43] Preus (1987), 40 ff.

[44] Geertz (1983), 57.

In the nineteenth century the Bengali language went through important changes as a consequence of contact with the English language. Significantly, a shift in the meaning of the word *dharma* took place among the educated elites. For people who stood with one foot in British culture and the other in Bengali culture, religion and *dharma* came to have identical meanings and were used to translate each other. The Hindu *dharma* became one religion among many and it could be compared to the Muslim *dharma*, the Buddhist *dharma*, or the Christian *dharma*, although many important Hindu intellectuals of the time saw Hinduism as superior and capable of encompassing all other religions.

It is possible to see the concept of Hindu Dharma as meaning the Hindu religion among Bengali Vaiṣṇavas as a self-demarcation against Islam.[45] But the most important changes in the use of the word took place in the contact with the English missionaries. Rammohan Roy was the first Bengali intellectual to speak of different *dharma*s in the meaning of religions. At first he was open to influences from outside and gave no special place to Hinduism in his call for reform. Later Hindu nationalist interpretations of *dharma*, for instance those associated with the Dharma Sabhā and the Ārya Samāj, were defensive reactions not only against the missionaries but also against Roy's latitudinarianism.[46]

For Bankimchandra Chatterji the term *dharma* was essential in his attempt to find a feasible synthesis of Indian religion and Western science. Bankimchandra was not unaware of the discrepancies between the traditional meaning of *dharma* and the one that he and his contemporaries had given it. As a Brahmin he had received a Sanskrit education from boyhood from a reputed Sanskritist in his home town, and he was introduced to the *Mahābhārata* by a family friend who was famous for his erudition.[47] Bankimchandra's treatise *Dharmatattva, The Essence of Dharma* was perhaps the most sophisticated work on *dharma* of the period. In an appendix to the chapter 'What is dharma?' he sought to illuminate the term *dharma* by giving six different contexts in which the word had been used: 'Firstly, that which is

[45] Halbfass (1990), 340. [46] Ibid. 343.
[47] Raychaudhuri (1988), 104–6.

called Religion in English, that we call Dharma, such as Hindudharma, Bauddhadharma, and Christiandharma.'[48]

Secondly, he continues, *dharma* can mean morality. Thirdly, virtue. Fourthly, actions can be classified as either *dharma* or *adharma*. Acts that conform to religion or *nīti*—which is given as a synonym for morality—are *dharma*. Deeds that go against it are adharma. Thus, *dharma* and *adharma* can mean the same as good deeds (*puṇya*) and sins (*pāpa*). Fifthly, *dharma* can mean the natural quality, property, or characteristic (*guṇa*) of anything. Thus, the *dharma* of a magnet is to attract iron. Something which is adharma in one sense may be *dharma* in another, Bankimchandra says. Here he points out the distinction between the neutral, purely descriptive sense of the word—the *guṇa* sense—and another, normative sense. We may draw a parallel to the English word *natural*, which has both descriptive and normative senses, a common source of confusion.[49] Ironically, the word that Bankimchandra chooses to gloss the neutral, descriptive sense of *dharma*—namely *guṇa*—itself has a second meaning of good quality, excellence, or virtue in Bengali and other modern Indian languages as well as in Sanskrit. Sixthly, *dharma* means the practice or custom of the people. He concludes that the word has carried different meanings and that the one currently used by Indians is simply a modern translation of the English word religion. It is no indigenous thing.[50]

But if the modern usage of the term *dharma* has appeared only after contact with the English language, what about the object it refers to? Did religion not exist in India before the intense contact with Europe from the eighteenth century? 'The people of our country did not perceive the independent existence of that object which is understood by the word religion. How can we name it by a familiar name when we have no understanding of it?'[51] Still, Bankimchandra defends the modern usage. He discusses the etymology of the Latin *religio* and concludes: 'The derivative meaning (*yaugik artha*) of the word *dharma* is very similar to the

[48] Bāgal, Baṅkim racanāvalī, ed. *Tṛtīya mudraṇa*, 671.

[49] This example is borrowed from Gombrich (1997), 154. Most of what I have to say about the relationship between the normative and descriptive uses of *dharma* is based on this article and a lecture on which the article is based.

[50] Bāgal, Baṅkim racanāvalī, ed. *Tṛtīya mudraṇa*, 589.

[51] Ibid. 673.

word *religio*. Therefore, I take dharma as a true synonym (*prakṛta pratiśabda*) of *religio*.'[52]

In summary Bankimchandra demonstrating his formidable erudition both in Indian and European literature, offers an exposition of the concepts of *dharma* and *religion*. His conclusion is that they are the same: *dharma* is the true synonym of *religion*. His treatise is a condensed statement of the conceptual development whereby religion came to be crystallized as a separate and clearly distinguishable aspect of Indian society. This development is significant to my central argument about the politics of religious identity; religion could not have been used in nationalist projects before this conceptual development had taken place.[53] Sudipta Kaviraj has made a point about the intellectual loneliness that Bankimchandra experienced as the result of his radical reconstruction of Hinduism; the fear of isolation is expressed in the *Dharmatattva* when the disciple tells the instructor that 'Hindus will not accept your Hinduism'.[54] Hindus may well have had a choice in rejecting the specifics of Bankimchandra's reconstructed Hinduism. The larger ideological development, however, was neither optional nor reversible for people educated in European thought.

RELIGION AND INDIVIDUALISM

It has already been mentioned that a shift of religious authority was a precondition for a feeling of national identity. The new leaders proclaimed a form of religion in which membership of the religious community was ascribed by birth and inclusive of all members of society. In the modern variants of the South Asian religions considered in this book, each individual member had a part to play in the life of the community. Religion became individualized; it became the birthright of every individual born into the community. One important consequence of Bankimchandra's reinterpretation of *dharma* was precisely the bringing into focus of the individual.

[52] Ibid. 674.
[53] I have looked at this process in more detail in Brekke (1999), 203–14.
[54] Kaviraj (1995), 104.

The individualization of religion was not a novelty in the history of India. For instance, in the religion of Rāmānuja, the great eleventh-century South Indian devotional teacher, the individual emerged from his or her position in the social structure, and the duties of caste and life-stage (*varṇāśramadharma*) gave place to the relationship between God and worshipper. Bankimchandra chose a different approach. For him the *dharma* of the *Bhagavadgītā* did not lose its significance in the modern world, it changed its meaning. Or rather, it changed its level of application. Bankimchandra insisted that the *dharma* Kṛṣṇa explained to Arjuna was not bound to the social system of India. Of course, he knew that the *dharma* of classical Hinduism really was about the duties connected with the caste system, but in order to make *dharma* into a universal principle that was not limited to India, he made it transcend caste by giving it an individual interpretation. Dharma was not about social position and social duties, but about the individual's potential for physical and psychological development and the duties entailed in this potential. Bankimchandra brought about an important relocation of religion: the focus shifted from social structure to the individual human being.

Bankimchandra's writings were the point of departure for much of Indian nationalism and social philosophy. For instance, the ideas of *dharma* held by the militant Aurobindu Ghose (1872–1950)—according to which the individual's nature and duty, *svabhāva* and *svadharma*, are separated from the social world of caste—were to a large extent borrowed from Bankimchandra.[55] Vivekānanda too inherited Bankimchandra's philosophy of individual religion. Bankimchandra's ambivalence toward the term *dharma* is a typical feature of modern Hinduism, and Vivekānanda revealed his indebtedness to Bankimchandra's project of redefinition in his own vacillating use of this notoriously elusive word. For Vivekānanda *dharma* sometimes meant religion, and sometimes it meant *dharma* in a classical Brahminical sense.[56] In a paper called 'The East and The West' he gave a characteristic double definition of *dharma*. He distinguished between, on the one hand, the *jāti dharma*—the *dharma* enjoined according to the different castes—and, on the

[55] Hacker (1978*a*), 519.

[56] See for instance his definition of the term in a letter to Miss Mary Hale. *The Complete Works*, viii. 324.

other hand, the *svadharma*—one's own *dharma*, or set of duties prescribed for man according to his capacity and position.[57] He talked about the social *dharma* related to caste, but he also talked about his own individual *dharma*.

Through his fame and popularity Vivekānanda was able to spread these new ideas of personal *dharma* and individual realization. Bankimchandra's redefinition of *dharma* may have individualized the idea of religious duties, but India had a long tradition of individual religion outside society—outside the traditional boundaries of *dharma*—and an Indian nationalist ideology that built on the new idea of individual *dharma* would need to define this new concept in relation to the classical individualist ideology of renunciation. Vivekānanda spent much of his life searching for a platform for social action both between the old and new ideals of *dharma* and between *dharma* and the tradition of *mokṣa* or individual salvation.

BETWEEN DHARMA AND *MOKṢA*

Louis Dumont has suggested that a key to understanding Hinduism can be found in the dialogue between the renouncer and the man in the world.[58] If one looks at the history of Indian religions from the angle of sociology, it appears as a history of reactions to the religion of the Brahmins—the establishment of sects or heterodox movements—and different attempts to solve the tensions that arose. Groups broke loose from the orthodox tradition and renounced the world of *dharma*. Next, synthesizing tendencies set in, often with the message that you may well renounce, but true renunciation does not mean a literal abandoning of the social world. It can mean anything else—renouncing acts and their fruits, profane desires, or the illusions of the world (*māyā*)—but it must not mean abandoning the social system and the authority of the Veda. It seems natural to see the *Bhagavadgītā's* famous dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battlefield as the search for such a synthesis. 'I will abandon my duty as a *Kṣatriya* and go begging instead of killing my gurus', says Arjuna. 'If you want to renounce, then renounce your acts, not the world', is Kṛṣṇa's reply to the prospective *Saṃnyāsin*. The relationship between the world of

[57] Ibid. v. 455. [58] Dumont (1980), 270.

dharma and the world of renunciation outside it is a focal point for an understanding of the changes in religion in India during the last decades of the nineteenth century as well as for an understanding of Vivekānanda's personal quest for identity.

The young Vivekānanda, or Narendranath, his real name, was a student from a middle-class background. He received an English education at the prestigious Presidency College, where Enlightenment ideas and values were the natural foundation of intellectual life. He sat for his BA in 1884. The most eminent of Vivekānanda's fellow students was undoubtedly Asutosh Mookerji, who would later become President of the Maha Bodhi Society. The college system and the students that it produced were a distinct and important aspect of Bengali society towards the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the students were men and they were mostly Brahmins, merchants, or clerks in terms of caste; Muslims were a tiny minority at this time. The college students played an increasingly important role in the social and political life of Calcutta and both the British authorities and the older generations of Bengalis looked at the student community with a certain apprehension.[59]

The young Narendranath was an active student. He engaged in music, sport, and political debates and he was expected to follow his father's profession as a lawyer. However, he was not destined for bourgeois family-life for in 1881 he met Ramakrishna. Although Narendranath showed interest in religion from early on, Ramakrishna was the main impulse for his growing attraction towards the life of a renouncer. Ramakrishna saw great potential in the young man and actively pursued him to join in the worship of the great goddess Kālī. At first Narendranath kept his distance, but in 1885 he accepted Ramakrishna as his guru. From then on, the pivot of Narendranath's life was the struggle to combine two fundamentally opposite roles.

A main theme of Vivekānanda's life is summed up in the central character of Tagore's novella *Caturanga*, the intelligent young Sachish, who drifts away from the uncompromising ideals of his humanist and atheist uncle towards religious renunciation under a Swami.[60] Vivekānanda was brought up as a man of the world. He

[59] Berwick (1995), 232–93.

[60] This similarity has been noted by others, for instance: Rāyachaudhurī (1388 Bengali era), 14.

could never abandon his concerns for social issues and he always fought to imbue the minds of his countrymen with national pride and self-esteem. However, he was strongly attracted to the life of the religious renouncer, the *Saṃnyāsin*. One of his biographers, Romain Rolland, pointed out that there was always a great struggle in the mind of Narendranath between 'le monde et Dieu. Tout dominer. Tout renoncer.'[61] Of course, Rolland, winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1915, was not a serious student of India although he wrote on Vivekānanda, Ramakrishna, and Gandhi.[62] Nevertheless, it is true that Vivekānanda's importance as a figure in the history of religions is to be found here: in the fact that he succeeded in integrating the two poles and making the new position plausible to a large number of people.

Vivekānanda wanted to change the role of the *Saṃnyāsin*. Although the attempt to integrate social work with renunciation was deeply rooted in his personal quest for identity, his ideas were certainly not intended only for himself. His remodelling of the life of the renouncer was one of the main themes in his influence on the other followers of Ramakrishna. After his return to Calcutta on 20 February 1897, Vivekānanda had a number of young men initiated into *Saṃnyāsa*. Gambhirananda writes about these initiations in his book on the history of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission: 'Outstanding as these achievements were, the Swāmi's greatest triumph lay in re-orientating the outlook of his brother-disciples from ideas of personal salvation to a sympathetic comprehension of the needs of the world.'[63]

One of the most important features of the religion espoused by the leaders of the time is the attitude that while the religious specialist has a great responsibility for the affairs of the world, the common people have a responsibility to engage in religious practice. Vivekānanda redefined renunciation to the extent that one could both renounce the world and engage wholeheartedly in political and charitable work. By forcing the monk to involve himself in the world, Vivekānanda wished to imbue the whole of society with the noble values and insights of the Hindu religion.

[61] Rolland (1930), 17.

[62] Two other biographers—of Tagore—ridicule Rolland's books on India, none of which were based on knowledge of any Indian language or Indian history. Rolland did not even know English, they say: Dutta and Robinson (1995), 222.

[63] Gambhirananda (1957), 117–18.

THE DEDICATED ASCETIC: REDEFINING RENUNCIATION

Vivekānanda attempted to legitimize his new position by redefining essential concepts to suit his needs, and perhaps the most essential concept to undergo radical change was renunciation. For the purposes of Vivekānanda's nationalist project the traditional asocial role of the renouncer was useless, but at the same time the archetypal figure of the half-naked ascetic in deep meditation was a powerful symbol of the intellectual and spiritual might of India, and could be used to good effect. The renouncer embodied spirituality, wisdom, unselfishness, incorruptibility, and strength of will for Vivekānanda, and although he could not promote the values of world-weary renunciation, he wished to keep the renouncer as an ideal for emulation.

First of all, Vivekānanda said, the object of renunciation was not the social world but rather misguided thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. Renunciation was leaving one's false ideas of the nature of reality. It was seeing the world as it really is.

> The ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such a height as in the teachings of the Vedanta. But, at the same time, dry suicidal advice is not intended; it really means deification of the world—giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is.[64]

It meant resisting the forces that bring the mind out of balance and seeing through the illusion of the world. Thus renunciation was purely a state of mind and there was no need to leave the world to practise it. Social position had nothing to do with the path of the *Saṃnyāsin*. Life in a family and in the society of caste was no obstacle to the religious life.

> You can have your wife; it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife. Give up your children; what does that mean? To turn them out of doors, as some human brutes do in every country? Certainly not. That is diabolism; it is not religion. But see God in your children.[65]

According to Vivekānanda, giving up the world did not mean giving up family life in a literal sense. The renouncer should

[64] *The Complete Works*, ii. 146. [65] Ibid. 148.

continue life with his wife and children, but he should see God in them because God was what remained everywhere and in everything if one realized the true nature of the world, he said. In the Brahminical tradition, renunciation was not only a state of mind but implied a clearly defined mode of living. It meant the literal abandoning of family and social position, it meant social death.

By redefining the concept of renunciation Vivekānanda was trying to solve one of the central tensions of Indian religion: the contradictions between the Brahminical tradition with its emphasis on ritual action and the ascetic tradition, which renounced all action and abandoned the world. One was seen as oppressive and exclusive, the other threatened to undermine the structure of society. Was there a way to continue worldly life while at the same time taking a stand against the religious monopoly of the Brahmins? As P. Jaini has pointed out the *Bhagavadgītā* offered a solution to this problem in its *Karmayoga*, the practice of disinterested action.[66] It was a tradition that Vivekānanda picked up to defend his blending of religious renunciation with social action in nineteenth-century India.

Leaving the nineteenth century for a moment and surveying the large themes of the history of Indian religion, the discovery is soon made that the redefinition of renunciation has been an important feature of earlier reform movements too. The major *bhakti* movements insisted that renunciation took place on a personal level and did not necessarily imply leaving the social world behind. This opened the door for anybody, irrespective of caste, age, and gender, to become a renouncer while carrying on their normal lives. For instance, the way to salvation in Rāmānuja's system was to surrender all acts and their fruits to God. In this way, agency (*kartṛtva*) did not arise and the individual was liberated from the bonds of *karma*. Thus Rāmānuja insisted that renunciation—by a twist of definition—could be brought back into society and have a function in the world of *dharma*. Vivekānanda continued a long tradition which sought to reinterpret renunciation; what was new in Vivekānanda's ideas was not the internalization of renunciation, but the call on every adult to become a renouncer and the insistence that renunciation must be combined with social activism and struggle for the nation.

[66] Jaini (1970), 73.

As the references both to Rāmānuja and to the *Gītā* illustrate, the fundamental question that guides ideas of renunciation concerns the nature of action, a concept that has been at the heart of the religious debate in India since the middle of the first millennium BCE Vivekānanda's use of the terms 'work' and 'karma' followed an orthodox definition. 'The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit *Kri*, to do; all action is Karma', he said.[67] 'Karma means work that will produce effect,'[68] and 'Any work, any action, any thought that produces an effect is called a Karma.'[69] In the tradition of the renouncers, action has always been regarded as the chain that ties beings to the suffering of the round of repeated birth and death. For the Jains, literal non-action and even death by starvation was considered a way to salvation. Vivekānanda rejected such a mechanical view of action. He offered the same argument against literal renunciation of the world as the *Gītā* and Rāmānuja. In his view, total inaction was impossible and the life of the renouncer could lead to no good. The solution would be to act but to detach oneself from one's actions and their fruits. He claimed that 'the doctrine which stands out luminously on every page of the *Gita* is intense activity, but in the midst of it, eternal calmness,'[70] and, 'This is the one central idea in the *Gita*: work incessantly, but be not attached to it.' Vivekānanda's call for social action and calm detachment at the same time was typical of his times: the renouncer should be a social worker and the man of the world should be a renouncer.[71]

To sum up, Vivekānanda professed a form of Hinduism in which the traditional distinctions between religious specialist and layman were blurred, and where every member of the Hindu nation had a right and a duty to engage in religion and take possession of a glorious cultural heritage. His ideas presupposed and implied a radical redefinition of religion that started with the meeting of India and Europe and was admirably formulated in the philosophical work of Bankimchandra. Religion emerged as a distinct object, Hinduism became one religion among many, and the Hindu religion was individualized and cut loose from the specifically Indian context of caste. But most importantly, Vivekānanda insisted that religion must entail activity for each individual. He and his followers

67 *The Complete Works* i. 27. 68 Ibid. 399. 69 Ibid. 94.
70 Ibid. ii. 292. 71 Ibid. i. 53.

sought to fuse spiritual striving with a life of social work and thus ended up between the world of *dharma* and the world of *mokṣa*, an ambivalent position from a traditional point of view but highly symptomatic of the nineteenth century.[72] It should be stressed, however, that Vivekānanda's religion was an ethical system of social involvement; it emphasized work in the interest of the poor masses and the nation, and is neatly summed up in T. Raychaudhuri's denomination of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission as 'dedicated ascetics'.[73]

[72] For a discussion of social service (*sevā*), see for instance Beckerlegge (1998), 158–93.
[73] Raychaudhuri (1998) 10.

2

Swami Vivekānanda and the Politics of Religion

Vivekānanda sought to use his ideas for a new Hindu identity in a programme of national solidarity and uplift. He was a reformist: he saw the hierarchy of caste as an obstacle to his nationalist project, he attacked the privileges of the Brahmins and wanted everybody to have a share in the high culture of India. Vivekānanda also looked beyond his own country and undertook a mission in the West. The end of the nineteenth century was a time when the Protestant Reformation of Europe, seen as a return to the sources of religion and a rejection of the authority and privileges of the priests, was widely accepted as a model for reform in India.[1] In a sense Vivekānanda's religion might be thought of as 'Protestant Hinduism', which has a parallel in the reformist Buddhism called 'Protestant Buddhism' by other writers and considered later in this book.

More important is how Vivekānanda perceived the relationship between Hinduism and other religious communities of India and how he presented this perception to the world. It could be said that Vivekānanda presented Muslim, Buddhist, and Jain leaders with a dilemma. He championed a tolerant Hinduism, at the same time making clear that other religions would be subordinate. Vivekānanda had grown up in a multireligious environment. He was proud of India's great Muslim empire as well as its Buddhist past, and his master, Ramakrishna, had emphasized the common core of all religions. Vivekānanda granted each religious community their rightful place both in the past and in the future of the Indian nation. He threw the nation's door wide open, one could say, and invited Muslims, Buddhists, and Jains to take a seat in the house of India. However, Hinduism would be the standard by

[1] Killingley (1998), 144.

which to measure both the theological and philosophical content as well as the histories of the other religions. Vivekānanda made Hinduism a widely accepted standard for spirituality and religion both at home and, to some extent, abroad. This restructuring in the ranks of world religions was a subtle and often unrecognized achievement, and yet it was arguably his most important feat. All creeds may well be equal, but Hinduism was more equal. As a consequence of this professed inequality in the relationship between different religions, the other leaders that I look at in this study found themselves between the devil and the deep blue sea. They wanted a share in India—her future as well as her past—but the assertive, sometimes haughty Vivekānanda did not always appeal to people whose pride was already hurt by colonial subordination. In particular, his anachronistic ideas of Buddhism, derived from a romantic Western indology, destroyed his friendly relationship to the Sinhalese Buddhist leader Anagārika Dharmapāla.

BREAKING OPEN THE TREASURE-BOX OF SANSKRIT CULTURE

In the *Ṛg Veda*, Speech describes herself as the queen and the gatherer of treasures.[2] The treasure that is gathered in the holy texts is the orthodox religious literature of India. One of the main goals of Vivekānanda was to break open the treasure-box of Sanskrit culture and spread it to everybody irrespective of caste, age, and gender.

Vivekānanda's view of language and the relationship between the extremes of high Sanskrit culture and village culture is particularly revealing. His most important task as a nationalist leader was to give all strata of society a share in the glorious past of India and thus make them identify with an emerging nation. T. Raychaudhuri has argued that the point where Vivekānanda stood radically apart from all other Hindu reformers of the era was in his emphasis on the underprivileged masses; the centre point for his Indian agenda was an effort to create mass consciousness, he says.[3] Vivekānanda was not a revolutionary in the sense that he

[2] *Ṛg Veda* 10.125; Coward and Raja (1990), 102.
[3] Raychaudhuri (1998), 9, 10.

wished to denounce the authority of the Brahmins for its own sake. However, he was a nationalist and the cultural and religious exclusivism of Brahminical society was not compatible with his political goals. Vivekānanda said of cultural and social segregation in India: 'The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher.'[4] The new South Asian religions looked at in this book insisted on breaking the cultural boundaries that separated the religious and cultural specialists from the rest of the population. The new leaders worked to spread a common high-culture and to make the masses conscious of their cultural unity. Vivekānanda said in a speech in Madras: 'the first question must be the breaking open of the cells that hide the wonderful treasures which our common ancestors accumulated. Bring these treasures out, and give them to everybody, . . . use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has and the thing is done.'[5]

This meant essentially to make everybody into a Brahmin, to give everybody access to the sacred tradition, to invest everybody down to the lowest untouchable with religious authority. Membership in the religious community was becoming inclusive, in Vivekānanda's rhetoric. In an essay on the reform of caste he summed up his interpretation of the classical literature on the subject in one passage: 'What is the plan? The ideal at one end is the Brahmin and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala, and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin.'[6] The literature that underpins a radical separation of the castes is 'diabolical old barbarism', he says. This all-embracing nationalism required an attack on the horizontal boundaries of castes, which constituted a formidable obstacle to a common Hindu identity.

The exclusivism of Brahminical culture was to a large extent a matter of language. Vivekānanda noted that the difference between Sanskrit and the vernaculars had caused an immeasurable gulf to arise between the learned and the common people, and he insisted that the people of Bengal must be taught in their own language. But what was Bengali in the 1890s? The Bengali language that is written and spoken in Bangladesh and West Bengal today did not exist until the nineteenth century. Before modern standardization

[4] *Speeches and Writings*, 549. [5] Ibid. 553.
[6] Ibid. 550.

the language of the people of the area was identified first of all by its not being Sanskrit or Persian. J. Bhattacharyya writes that 'until the 19th Century, the people of Bengal did not speak "Bengali". They spoke a *bhasha*, the current speech, distinguished from Sanskrit or Persian, natural, un-selfconscious, anonymous, speech.'[7]

With the rise of the Good People or *bhadralok*, and the value given to the classical Indian culture and Sanskrit by the British Orientalists, the Bengali language became heavily sanskritized. As mentioned earlier, when Wellesley established Fort William College in 1800, he requested Sanskrit scholars to prepare teaching material. A Bengali grammar and several works in Bengali prose were produced and studied in the first decades of the nineteenth century. 'But they were not specimens of chaste Bengali; for, the language not having a copious vocabulary then, there were too many Persian words in them.'[8]

The Hindus of Bengal were generally better educated and more politically conscious than the Muslims at this time. In order to make a chaste Bengali language, one had to make words from Sanskrit, not from Persian or Arabic, many Hindus felt. Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara, a central Bengali intellectual of the period, wrote the *Vetala-panchabinsati* in 1847 for the teaching of Bengali at the Fort William College. 'This was the first work in pure Bengali', S. Sastri says.[9]

The degree of sanskritization in many products of this nascent print-language is amply illustrated by looking at the number of Sanskrit words in a book called the *Kādambarī* by Tārāśaṅkar Tarkaratna. On five pages of this work S. K. Chatterji counted no less than 670. This constituted an astonishing 67 per cent of all the words on the five pages.[10] Vivekānanda reacted against extreme forms of sanskritization which, he thought, made the Bengali language artificial and unfit for the functions that a language should fulfil. 'Our language is becoming artificial by imitating the slow and pompous movement—and only that—of Sanskrit.'[11] The development of the classical Sanskrit language with its ornamental diction and its syntactical intricacies was a sign of the spiritual

[7] Bhattacharyya (1987), 56. [8] Sastri Ramtanu Lahiri, ed. Lethbridge, 57.
[9] Ibid. 57–8. [10] Chatterji (1970), i. 222.
[11] *The Complete Works*, vi. 188.

decay of India, Vivekānanda insisted. The style was both preposterous and comical, in his eyes. 'Great God! What a parade they make! After ten pages of big adjectives, all on a sudden you have—"There lived the King!" Oh, what an array of spun-out adjectives, and giant compounds, and skilful puns! They are symptoms of death.'[12]

Vivekānanda also emphasized the need for a standardized Bengali, which would be the Bengali print language and would serve as the primary medium of communication from Chittagong to Baidyanath. He found it natural to choose the dialect of Calcutta as the language on which to base the modern Bengali. 'We must accept that which is gaining strength and spreading through natural laws, that is to say, the language of Calcutta.'[13] Of course, such a choice is unavoidable if one is to make a print language out of the variety of dialects necessarily existing inside a geographical area of some size. More importantly, the choice is unavoidably political in the sense that the dialect of one group is endowed with the status of a national language and takes precedence over the other dialects of the area.[14]

Several decades earlier Rammohan Roy had translated important *Upaniṣads* into Bengali in an attempt to give those who did not read Sanskrit access to the contents of the texts. In the same spirit, Vivekānanda now wanted to raise the Indian masses and give them their share in the cultural and religious treasures of India. He rightly perceived universal access to a common culture to be a prerequisite for national unity.[15] He talked about how the ancient seers—the 'rishis of yore' as he put it—had refused the common people access to the holy truths. The Introduction to this book addressed the importance of *adhikāra*, exclusive religious authority, in the Brahminical attitude to religion. Vivekānanda attacked this idea with zeal: 'The *Adhikaravada* [the doctrine of right authority] is the outcome of pure selfishness. They [the Brahmins] knew that by this enlightenment on their special subjects they would lose their superior position of instructors to the people.'[16] The question of language surfaced naturally in this

[12] Ibid. 189. [13] Ibid. 188.

[14] See Hobsbawn (1995), 52–5. For the role of capitalism in the choice of print language, see Anderson (1991), 43–5.

[15] For discussions of common cultures and nationalism, see Gellner (1996) 7, 11–13, 35; Smith (1991), 71; Anderson (1991), 9 ff.

[16] *The Complete Works*, v. 263.

discussion. 'Every man is capable of receiving knowledge if it is imparted in his own language. A teacher who cannot convince others should weep on account of his own inability to teach the people in their own language, instead of cursing them and dooming them to live in ignorance and superstition.'[17]

Vivekānanda's reformist ideas also had a global aspect to them. Through the years after his first arrival in the US this aspect became more and more important. In a speech held in Manamadura shortly after his return from the West in 1897, Vivekānanda talked about the treasure that the forefathers had left for Indians, which the whole world now required. 'The world will die if this treasure is not distributed', he assured his listeners.[18] This was a powerful *leitmotif* in Vivekānanda's speeches in Sri Lanka and India during the period of triumphant return. His success so far had convinced him of the possibility and the necessity of bringing the religious wisdom of India to the spiritually impoverished West.

MISSIONARY HINDUISM

According to Vivekānanda, the religious treasures of India were not only the rightful heritage of Indians, they were also the only remedy for a world blinded by materialism. It seems natural, then, that Vivekānanda should become a zealous Hindu missionary. But the fact is that Hinduism had no real tradition for missionary activities comparable to Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity. Indeed, it seems quite meaningless to talk about missionary Hinduism before the late nineteenth century and the crystallization of Hinduism as a distinct religion. Bankimchandra's work on *dharma* and religion should probably be seen as a condensed statement of a larger conceptual development that took place in the interface between European and Indian languages and literatures. Before this development, Hinduism was not a religion that could be separated from its larger cultural context and could not, therefore, be preached outside India. Vivekānanda stood at the end of this conceptual development; it was a precondition for his becoming the first Hindu missionary.[19]

[17] *The Complete Works*, v. 263. [18] Ibid. iii. 167. [19] Brekke (1999).

Vivekānanda founded the Ramakrishna Mission, among the aims of which, (formulated in May 1897) were both national missionary activity, 'The activities of the Mission should be directed to the establishment of Maths and Ashramas in different parts of India' and international missionary activity, 'Its work in the Foreign Department should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India.'[20] The missionary activity was intense. However, it was not really carefully planned, nor did it last very long. It was only during Vivekānanda's stays in the US that he gradually realized that he wished to spread Hinduism, or more specifically the Vedānta tradition, in the West.

The Parliament of Religions in 1893 marked the beginning of Vivekānanda's missionary work outside India. He began to think seriously of attending the Parliament some time the year before. He discussed the plans with several important people and was offered financial assistance both by the Maharaja of Mysore and by the Raja of Ramnad. He turned the offers down. When he publicly declared his intentions of going to the West to preach Hinduism, his disciples collected 500 rupees for his travel expenses. Vivekānanda told them to distribute the money among the poor. He wanted to test the will of the Mother, he said: if he was really destined to preach in the US and Europe, the money would come by itself. However, he later revealed that he was extremely anxious at the time because of the gloomy prospects for the journey.

In February 1893 Vivekānanda was in Hyderabad where he again turned down offers of financial support from prominent people. His reasons for declining seem to have been distrust in the seriousness of his potential benefactors. He did not want to get involved in such a project if his backing in India was less than secure. However, Vivekānanda seems to have been quite determined to take himself to the West, if necessary on foot, walking through Afghanistan and Iraq to Europe. In the end, it was the Maharaja of Khetri who came to the rescue.

To Vivekānanda, the Maharaja was not only an invaluable supporter of his cause but a personal friend. The young Narendranath was always a welcome guest in the Maharaja's home and it was in fact the Maharaja who first suggested to him his religious name at the beginning of his career as a religious wanderer. At the

[20] *Life of Swāmi Vivekananda*, 501–2, quoted in Gambhirananda (1957), 120.

beginning of April 1893 the Maharaja by accident came to know that Vivekānanda was staying in Madras. However, he did not know that his friend was becoming more and more desperate in his search for secure financial backing for his journey. Indeed, it is unlikely that the Maharaja would have known about the situation unless he had sent his private secretary, Munshi Jagmohanlal, to Madras to invite Vivekānanda to the birthday party of his baby. In Madras Jagmohan sent a letter to his master in Khetri explaining the precarious situation that Vivekānanda was in. The Maharaja answered promptly; he was more than willing to pay Vivekānanda's journey to the US. Moreover, he continued to send money to his protégé throughout his travels abroad.[21]

Vivekānanda's foreign mission was an intensely political activity. In a lecture in London in 1896 Vivekānanda spoke on the spread of Advaita Vedānta in the West. Echoing Kṛṣṇa's words in the *Bhagavadgītā*, he asserted that Advaita came whenever religion seemed to disappear and irreligion seemed to prevail; that was why it had taken ground in Europe and the US.[22] He made it clear that the missionary endeavour of Advaita Vedānta was part of the self-assertion of Hindus: he said that he wished to flood the country of the Yankees with idolatrous missionaries and he had grandiose ideas of how the US and Europe could be converted to Advaita Vedānta in a matter of decades.[23] It was the spiritual qualities of India that would make Hinduism victorious in the West, Vivekānanda continued, always harping on his idea of East and West as two opposite worlds with incomparable achievements in the inner and the outer realms respectively. At home, Vivekānanda's religion was about national uplift and social reform; abroad, religion was a playing-field on which India could meet the world and win the match.

EAST AND WEST

The dichotomy between East and West was an organizing principle that formed the very basis for Vivekānanda's missionary activity. The Indian elites of the nineteenth century were profoundly influenced by

[21] The Maharaja's answer of 11 April 1893 has been published in Sharma (1963), 79–82.

[22] *The Complete Works*, ii. 139.

[23] Hacker (1978*b*), 573.

the world view and values of the colonial centre. Britain was the political, economic, and geographical heart of colonialism in the late nineteenth century; if one takes a look at a world map of the time, one is likely to find the margins lavishly embellished by illustrations of beautiful Britannia in the centre surrounded by humble representatives from the different corners of her realm.

Vivekānanda was obsessed with the relationship between East and West and his rhetorical skills were often applied in the attempt to change the relationship. He declared that the two were fundamentally different and that the might of the East was in the realm of religion, not in the realm of external power. India and the West were permeated by completely different spirits. In the terminology of classical Indian ontology, the West had *rajas*, the qualities of strength, energy, and vitality, whereas India had *sattva*, the qualities of spirituality, freedom, and light. The difference was not simply a neutral one, for (as he well knew) this ancient classification has a hierarchy in which the qualities of *sattva* are superior.

His dialogue with the West was not that of the poor and subjugated with the rich and powerful. Vivekānanda readily accepted the superiority of the West in terms of economy and technology. But India was rich and powerful in an equally important realm: that of religion and spirituality. This idea in itself was, to a large extent, one that had developed in the West, and it was probably one of the many issues that developed in Vivekānanda's thinking during his first stay in the US.[24] Thus Vivekānanda turned the tables on the West by applying the distinction between the external and the internal realm. In his discourse with a Western audience Vivekānanda managed to put India in a superior position. Discussions of religion and history were conducted on India's premisses, and the West could be judged according to Indian standards. His dialogue with the West was a negotiation for India's position in the world. Vivekānanda presented India as the historical centre of gravity in terms of religiosity, spirituality, and humanist civilization and the Hindu nation was the caretaker of this great heritage.

As previously mentioned, the tension between *dharma* and *mokṣa* was a central theme in Vivekānanda's life. Both goals were legitimate and necessary for full human development, he thought.

[24] Killingley (1998), 138–57.

But neither Western nor Indian civilization had managed to harmonize the two. The West had pursued *dharma* in the sense that it had cultivated the this-worldly aspects of life. The East had been lost in *mokṣa* or the purely spiritual and other-worldly. Although Vivekānanda undoubtedly saw India's spiritual qualities as superior, both elements were necessary to bring humanity to a higher stage of development. Whereas the manipulative powers of the West would help India out of poverty, the knowledge of India would help the West to realize its spiritual potential. To his Western disciples Vivekānanda preached religion. To his Indian followers he preached self-strengthening and the alleviation of poverty.

Vivekānanda was an intelligent speaker. By bringing two different spheres of human existence into the discussion of East and West, he managed to change the structure of their relationship in the minds of many Indians and a few Westerners as well. Similarly, by bringing two levels of abstraction into his account of the relationship between Advaita Vedānta and other religions, he managed to slant this relationship too in favour of Vedānta. He undermined the idea of India as the periphery of the Western world and at the same time he peripheralized the other religious communities of India. On the surface Vivekānanda was tolerant, but, on a more subtle level his tolerance did not imply equality. It was clear that the Hindu nation would be the master in the house of India that was being built. The idea that Hinduism encompassed other religions was not new. D. Gellner has pointed out that Nepalese religious history can be understood as the gradual process by which Hinduism succeeded in encompassing Buddhism and other religious traditions, and this is clearly an important theme in the religious history of South Asia as a whole.[25] Vivekānanda's rhetorical achievements had consequences for the leaders of other religious communities.

VIVEKĀNANDA AND BUDDHISM

For Vivekānanda, Buddhism and Jainism were religions in the meaning of creeds or sects. They were highly developed and contained much good, but basically they were religions on a par

[25] Gellner (1992), esp. 103.

with Christianity and Islam. Buddhism could no more satisfy the requirements for a universal religion than could Christianity,[26] for like any other creed, they developed only certain parts of the human being. The world needed a system that brought the whole of the human being and the whole of humanity towards perfection. The flaw that characterized Buddhism was that it taught salvation and renunciation whilst ignoring the requirements of the physical and social world. This teaching had been disastrous to India's development, Vivekānanda thought.[27] Hinduism for Vivekānanda meant Advaita Vedānta. Vedānta was not a religion, it was the essence of religion, and encompassed all sects. In his main paper at the Parliament of Religions he said: 'From the high spiritual flights of Vedantic philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, the agnosticism of the Buddhas, the atheism of the Jains, and the low ideas of idolatry with the multifarious mythology, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.'[28]

He was certain that only the monistic Vedānta tradition could provide a basis for national unity. The oneness of man with man could promote solidarity and break the internal barriers of society. The oneness of man with God could give people strength and belief in their power to raise themselves out of misery. Vedānta could lead India towards perfection. Moreover, it was the duty of Indians to spread Vedānta to the West, where people were lost in their perverse quest for external powers and pleasures.

Tolerance was the main theme in Vivekānanda's first address at the Parliament of Religions in 1893 and the word often pops up in later speeches and writings. But what did Vivekānanda's tolerance really entail? First of all, it must be noted that, as with many of his themes, his ideas about tolerance were not completely consistent. Vivekānanda was a charismatic leader. He was an intelligent man and a powerful speaker, but he was not a philosopher and it would, perhaps, be unfair to look for a high degree of rigour in his use of concepts. Nevertheless, some things are clear throughout Vivekānanda's works. He regarded it as a historical fact that real tolerance had existed only in India; other peoples had talked about tolerance, whereas Indians had practised it. In the Christian world

[26] See for instance *The Complete Works*, iv. 375.
[27] See for instance ibid. v. 447–8.
[28] Quoted in Barrows (ed.) (1893), ii. 968.

sectarian ideas have hindered tolerance, he said. The idea that one religion was right and another wrong was the start of intolerance and, consequently, a person who belonged to and identified with a particular religion could not be tolerant. Such a person was like a frog in a well: he could not realize that there was an ocean out there that was infinitely larger than his little pond.

Buddhism was an organic part of Indian culture, according to Vivekānanda, and the teaching of the Buddha would play an essential part in the future India. However, Vivekānanda's ideas about Buddhism were slightly unorthodox and they became more controversial in reaction to the Buddhist revival, which was gaining momentum during his lifetime. He believed that Buddhism was not a separate religion but part of Hindu culture and founded on Vedānta, like everything else that was good in the history of Indian philosophy and religion.

As a young man and a follower of Ramakrishna, Narendranath, as his name was then, travelled to Bodh Gayā, where the Buddha attained enlightenment, together with two fellow devotees. This was in the beginning of 1886, several years before he would hear of the Buddhist revival and long before the beginning of the Buddhist quest to take control of Bodh Gayā. Bodh Gayā made a firm impression on Narendranath's mind and when he returned to Ramakrishna they had a long conversation about the qualities of the Buddha.[29] Two strands of thought seem to blend in his discussion of Buddhism with Ramakrishna: on the one hand it is clear that Narendranath had read standard European accounts of the life of the Buddha, while on the other hand he interpreted the teaching of the Buddha in the light of the devotional theism of his teacher.

Vivekānanda would later make a very clear distinction between Buddhism and the teaching of the Buddha, for he was certain that the ideas and practices that were called Buddhism in his times had nothing to do with the original teachings.[30] Buddhism was once a rational movement of social reform, he said, following the typical Victorian ideas about the Buddha and his enlightened humanistic teaching. Just like many contemporaries in India and the West,

[29] The conversation was recorded and published in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda.

[30] See for instance *The Complete Works*, v. 309.

Vivekānanda was happy to embrace a vague and romantic idea of Buddhism in the same way as he applauded the revolutionary figures of Washington and Napoleon or admired the achievements of Rome and Greece. However, Vivekānanda's tolerance proved theoretical and fastidious when confronted with the realities of modern South Asian Buddhism.

VIVEKĀNANDA AND DHARMAPĀLA

At the Parliament of Religions Vivekānanda met Anagārika Dharmapāla for the first time. These two missionaries who represented different but, in their view, closely related aspects of the Indian religious heritage initially became good friends and saw in each other an important potential ally.[31] The feeling of common purpose that Dharmapāla felt with Vivekānanda at the Parliament was a boost to his self-confidence. Dharmapāla left the US soon after, whereas Vivekānanda stayed, but even in Calcutta the two moved to some extent in the same circles. Dharmapāla wrote in his diary on 2 April 1894, 'Went in the evening to see some friends of Swami Vivekānanda who were anxious to hear about his doings in America. Told them of his heroic work and the great sensation he is making in the US.'[32] Dharmapāla had just arrived in Calcutta after a long journey from San Francisco via Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Sri Lanka.

However, there was never any symmetry in the relationship between Vivekānanda and Dharmapāla. To Dharmapāla, India was the cradle of everything good and the sacred sites of Buddhist India were the religious and geographic centres that gave orientation and meaning to his life. The modern Buddhists had long ago lost contact with India and a revival of the old links would necessarily take place at the mercy of the Hindus of Bengal. For his part, Vivekānanda had little respect for Dharmapāla as a thinker or a speaker. The Buddhism that Dharmapāla preached became, in Vivekānanda's eyes, a sectarian mix of theosophy and Western scholarly and semi-scholarly writing. As a consequence, Vivekānanda's attitude towards Dharmapāla was highly patronizing, and their friendship

[31] Ibid. 24. [32] *Maha Bodhi*, Dec. 1951, 426.

would go sour as Dharmapāla felt more and more marginalized by his more successful contemporary.

As will be described in detail later, Dharmapāla's life project was to take possession of the historical Buddhist sites in India, primarily Bodh Gayā, where the Buddha had attained enlightenment. For this work he founded the Mahabodhi Society with its headquarters in Calcutta. Vivekānanda took little or no interest in the work of the Buddhist organization in India, partly because he was busy with his work in the US during some of the fiercest controversies, but also because he despised theosophy, without which Dharmapāla's movement would not have come into being.[33] Vivekānanda's disrespect for theosophy and its representatives was undoubtedly linked to his call for reason in religious affairs, and his attitude on this was the same as that of the more sober representatives of the academic community in the West, like Max Müller. We may also recall that Enlightenment ideals were a basic ingredient of his student years at Presidency College in Calcutta.

On 7 March 1897 the chief theosophist Colonel Olcott wrote a letter about the relationship between Vivekānanda and prominent theosophists to the *Indian Mirror* on the occasion of a speech given by the famous Hindu leader in Calcutta. The Colonel wrote that Vivekānanda had been hostile to the society as long as he could remember and that the tone of the Swami when speaking about Madame Blavatsky and theosophical ideas was so cold and unsympathetic that he was in no doubt that Vivekānanda was a declared enemy of the theosophists.[34]

The idea that modern Buddhists, the representatives of one branch of the Hindu religion, should assert their separate identity and even make territorial claims based on this identity was, in Vivekānanda's view, not only a sign of niggardliness but an instance of religious sectarianism, the fundamental problem of human history. Although Vivekānanda had sporadic contacts with Dharmapāla, there is no evidence they discussed the problem of Bodh Gayā. There can be no doubt, however, that Vivekānanda was firmly against Dharmapāla's goals and methods. This assertion is corroborated by the fact that Sister Nivedita, Vivekānanda's closest woman disciple, continued her master's work for a united

[33] See for instance *The Complete Works*, iv. 317–19.
[34] *Swami Vivekānanda in Contemporary Indian News*, ed. Basu, 168–9.

India and worked wholeheartedly against the Buddhist take-over of the sacred site. In a letter of 1903 to a friend she wrote, 'All this trouble stirred up by that wretched fanatic Dharmapāla out of misguided idea of glorifying Buddha! At bottom, ignorance of history and limitation of religious ideas.'[35] On this she expressed the attitude of her master.

For Vivekānanda, as for Dharmapāla, Buddhism was fundamentally the teaching of the Buddha as described by Western or westernized scholarship, although he insisted on interpreting the message of the Buddha within a Hindu framework. The teaching of the Buddha had very little to do with the culture and religion of the modern Sri Lankans, or of other Asian nations for that matter. Vivekānanda always saw Buddhism as an important aspect of a future India, but from the beginning of his international career in September 1893 he was less and less inclined to find a place for the practice and teachings of modern variants. Manliness and strength were important to him and the Buddhists of Sri Lanka embodied weakness and religious corruption in his eyes. Vivekānanda adored the Buddha, but despised Buddhists.

When Dharmapāla travelled to the US for the second time, Vivekānanda had just left for Europe. On 9 June 1896 Dharmapāla received a letter from Vivekānanda. He noted in his diary, 'Vivekānanda advises to spread Buddhism. There is a consensus of opinion now that the Dharma should be disseminated.'[36] Vivekānanda had come to the end of a long period of work which had resulted in the establishment of the Vedānta Society in New York in February of the same year, with Mr Francis H. Leggett as President. The continuing work was left to American co-workers until the end of June, when Swami Sāradānanda was sent from London. Sāradānanda settled down in New York, while Swami Abhedānanda was sent for to take his place in London. With able associates established in New York and London, Vivekānanda could start thinking about the work in India again. He left Europe in December and arrived triumphantly in his mother-country late in January 1897.

The Vivekānanda who returned to India was a different person from the romantic young man who four years earlier had prayed to

[35] Nivedita, *Letters of Sister*, ed. Basu, 605.
[36] *Maha Bodhi*, Jan. 1955, 20.

the Mother for a miracle to pay his ticket to Chicago. The Parliament of Religions had made him famous. The celebrity status he enjoyed during later work in the US made him certain of his own greatness. Back home Indian nationalism had gained momentum, and Vivekānanda's success in the US had also had a great impact. He wrote home to Alasinga in 1894, 'My little work here makes a big echo in India, do you know? So I shall not return there in a hurry.'[37] Vivekānanda was always aware that he worked for India when he was away and to him the West was a place from which India could be influenced and changed for the better. When he returned in 1897, he was the big name in the Indian newspapers and among people of Madras and Calcutta.

A VISIT TO SRI LANKA AND A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

In his account of the Bodh Gayā case and Dharmapāla's role in it, A. Trevithick remarks in passing that Vivekānanda made certain statements about Buddhism that enraged Dharmapāla, but he makes no attempt to understand the reason for the conflict or to put it in its larger context of the revival of Indian religions.[38] As these two men were at the centre of this revival, a better understanding of their relationship will shed some light both on contemporary ideas of what religion is and on how religion was used to strengthen nations.

Vivekānanda had high opinions of Buddhism throughout his first journey in the West and they were still strong when he left the US in the spring of 1896 to go to India via Europe. These opinions, however, were to get a serious blow when he stopped over in Sri Lanka on his way home and had the chance to observe the religion of the island. The Buddhism he encountered among the Sinhalese shocked him deeply and the experience of Sri Lanka in January 1897 dramatically transformed his ideas about the modern manifestations of the Buddha's teaching. Never again would he think of Buddhism as the noble creed of the future India. Soon after, he started making highly critical comments about the religion of the Sinhalese and other modern Buddhists in letters and articles.

[37] *The Complete Works*, v. 62.
[38] Trevithick (1988), 186–7.

This turn against Buddhism hurt Dharmapāla deeply and their friendship would never recover. On 3 April 1897 Dharmapāla wrote a long note in his diary about the attacks that Vivekānanda had levelled against Buddhism.[39] At this time Dharmapāla was still in the US and he discussed Vivekānanda's contemptuous utterances with his friends and contacts. 'Vivekānanda has denounced Buddhism in unmeasured terms', he said, and he recalled how he had in the past defended Vivekānanda in lectures and given his support to his work. Now, when Vivekānanda's turn had come to help, he had shown his true nature. Dharmapāla painted a picture of himself as the betrayed martyr, a typical trait of his personality.

If Dharmapāla later got a chance to look at newspapers and reports from Vivekānanda's visit to Sri Lanka, they would probably have added to Dharmapāla's feeling of marginalization vis-à-vis India. The fact is that Vivekānanda's short stop-over in Sri Lanka became a great celebration of Hinduism. He held speeches in several places around the island and everywhere he went he was cheered by thousands of exuberant co-religionists. Different committees 'consisting of the leading gentlemen from the various sections of the Hindu community' planned the reception of the Swami well in advance of his arrival.[40] In Jaffna, Vivekānanda was taken in a procession of 15,000 people from the town to the Hindu college along a route that was illuminated and decorated for the occasion. Even when he arrived in Kandy, the old capital of the Sinhalese Buddhist kingdom, he was met by a large crowd of excited Jaffna Tamils.[41] Buddhist Sri Lanka was not part of the festivities and Vivekānanda left the island with the impression that Sinhalese Buddhism had degenerated to become a compilation of base superstitions.

Vivekānanda's denunciation of Buddhism occupied Dharmapāla's mind throughout his stay in the US. He wrote in his diaries about the terrible attacks on Buddhism and talked about it with people around him. Among them were followers of Vivekānanda in the US and thus news of Dharmapāla's resentment reached India. At the beginning of April Mrs Ole Bull wrote to her Indian master calling his attention to his strong utterances against Buddhism.[42] Mrs Bull

[39] *Maha Bodhi*, June 1956, 294–5.

[40] From the *Ceylon Independent* repr. in *Swami Vivekānanda in Contemporary Indian News* ed. Basu, 112.

[41] Ibid. 115–16.

[42] *Maha Bodhi*, June 1956, 296.

was a close and respected friend of Vivekānanda, who often referred to her as his mother.

This was not the first time Mrs Bull had taken her master to task for criticizing other religions. Two years earlier she had reprimanded him when he engaged in an excited argument with a Presbyterian gentleman who got 'angry and abusive'.[43] Now the matter was more serious, since Buddhism after all was an Indian religion and should be part of the general uplift of Indian culture. In Vivekānanda's mind, however, this was hardly the case any more. A month later Vivekānanda answered Mrs Bull in a letter from Calcutta explaining in more detail how his bad feelings and derogatory utterances regarding Buddhism derived from his observations of the religion of the Sinhalese people. His visit to Sri Lanka had thoroughly disillusioned him, he said.[44] The Buddhists were europeanized—even Dharmapāla and his family originally had European names—and the only people spiritually alive in Sri Lanka were the Hindus. 'I once thought', he continued 'that Buddhism would do much good.' Now, however, he clearly saw the reason why Buddhism had been driven out of India. According to Vivekānanda, this religion with its hideous idols and licentious rites was on a par with theosophy and had no place in its land of origin.

Of course, the Asia-friendly congregation in the US was not extensive around the middle of the 1890s; the missionaries were in the initial stages of their work at this time. It is not very strange, then, that Dharmapāla and Vivekānanda should move to some extent in the same circles in Chicago and New York, as they did in Calcutta. And it was unavoidable that the US too should become a theatre of competition and conflict between the two bold and unyielding characters. They soon became contenders fighting for followers rather than allies in the renegotiation of the relationship between East and West. Dharmapāla was anxious about the success of Hinduism in the US and tried to warn people not to overlook the points of weakness and the inner contradictions of the system.

Dharmapāla's relationship to Vivekānanda became ever more competitive. On 19 May 1897 he wrote in his diary that he felt sorry to see Vivekānanda's Hinduism spread in the US.[45] His

[43] *The Complete Works*, v. 70. [44] Ibid. vii. 505–6.
[45] *Maha Bodhi*, July 1956, 346.

anxiety about Vivekānanda was reinforced when he read an interview in a newspaper in which the famous Bengali denounced theosophy. Dharmapāla wrote in his diary on 20 March 1897 that he was shocked at Vivekānanda's utterance. He was eager in his defence of theosophical doctrines and concluded that 'Vedantism does not give life. It kills spirituality that produces compassion.'[46]

In the summer of 1899 Vivekānanda set out on his second journey to the West.[47] On the way the ship stopped for a few days in Colombo and he used the opportunity to write down his thoughts on the Sinhalese people and their religion.[48] He started his description by recalling the ancient links with India. He summed up the account of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of how Rāma built a bridge across the sea and conquered Rāvaṇa. This was not purely legendary to Vivekānanda, for, as he said, he had seen the bridge with his own eyes and had even studied the inscriptions by which Rāma installed the first Setupati, Lord of the Bridge. However, the story was not accepted by the Sinhalese, he complained, and he ridiculed the Sinhalese for lack of vigour or heat (*jhāl*). They were weak and effeminate in every possible way, he asserted.

Vivekānanda then summed up the history of Sri Lanka. In the most ancient times Vijayasiṃha came from Bengal and established his rule by evil means. He befriended the local king, then killed him along with the whole indigenous race. Thus, from the beginning the Sinhalese were simply a colony of wicked Bengalis. Then Aśoka sent his missionaries to the barbarous island to civilize its people. They introduced Buddhism and little by little the Sinhalese became very zealous Buddhists. Great stūpas, temples, and statues were erected and monks and nuns spread all over the island. So far, Vivekānanda's depictions of Sinhalese history are more or less congruent with those contained in the historical chronicles in Pāli. Then, however, follows Vivekānanda's denunciation of Sinhalese national history. Soon, he asserted, corruption set in again: the Sinhalese started painting terrible scenes from hell on the walls of their buildings. They delighted in depicting the most horrible

46 Ibid. Mar. 1956, 102.

47 His memoirs were published as *Parivrājaka* in 1369 Bengali era (translated in *The Complete Works*, vii. 297–404). The *Parivrājaka* is a nice piece of travel literature with fascinating descriptions of sea travel, shark-fishing, and thoughts on cultures, peoples, and religions.

48 Vivekānanda (1369 Bengali era), 54 ff.

tortures and this was an expression of the destruction of the spirit of non-violence, so essential to Buddhism. Vivekānanda linked these corruptions to the practices of modern Buddhism. He had heard that Buddhists were peaceful and tolerant towards all religions, he said, but that had been proved wrong.[49]

In order to illustrate the intolerance of Sinhalese Buddhism, Vivekānanda recalled an incident that took place when he was speaking to a crowd of Hindus in the historical site of Anuradhapura. In the middle of his lecture Buddhist monks and lay-people appeared and made a terrible uproar. There was almost a violent clash. The Hindus were the ones to practise non-violence and they tackled the situation without bloodshed, Vivekānanda claimed. But the Buddhists did not restrict their aggressive activities to Sri Lanka, he added. 'Buddhist preachers come to Calcutta and abuse us with choice epithets, although we offer them enough respect.'[50] The Buddhist preachers in Calcutta were, of course, Dharmapāla and his co-workers. The Buddhist revival initiated by Dharmapāla was definitely not the role that Vivekānanda wished Buddhism to have in India.

In summary, Vivekānanda saw the Sinhalese as a backward people whose religion was a perverted version of the Buddha's teachings. It was the lack of real manliness that was the essential flaw. However, on this point Vivekānanda's critique of Buddhism rebounded to become an attack on the weakness of his own people. Vivekānanda saw strength and manliness as the precondition for national uplift and he despised the lack of it among both Bengalis and Sinhalese. 'Why don't the weak members of the Bengali race emigrate to Ceylon?' he asked with brutal irony. Surely, weakness of body and mind was a trait which revealed the common origins of the Bengalis and the Sinhalese, he said.

[49] The attitude that everything in Buddhism that refers to terrible things is an unacceptable corruption has been widespread in the West both among non-experts and, to some extent, among scholars. The fearful has a central function in Indian religious thought and in Buddhism in particular: Brekke (1998*b*), 1–29.

[50] *The Complete Works*, vii. 337.

Part II

BUDDHISTS

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3

Defining Buddhism

Anagārika Dharmapāla was beyond doubt the most important reformer of Buddhism in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka. Born on 17 September 1864 into the respectable and wealthy Hewavitarne family in Matara, Sri Lanka, Dharmapāla received an English education, which was terminated in 1883. From 1884 he came under the influence of the theosophists Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, who had established their headquarters at Adyar outside Madras. They had high hopes for the young Dharmapāla as a reformer of Buddhism. In 1891 Dharmapāla visited Bodh Gayā, the archaeological site in Bengal (modern Bihar), where the Buddha attained enlightenment and this visit inspired him to establish the Maha Bodhi Society with the purpose of taking control over Bodh Gayā for the Buddhists of Asia. In 1893 Dharmapāla met Vivekānanda in Chicago, as described, and three years later he went on a second visit to the US. He saw himself as the first Buddhist missionary to the West. Dharmapāla's main concern, however, was the Buddhist sites of India, on the one hand, and the espousal of a national Buddhist ethic in Sri Lanka, on the other. Dharmapāla was not ordained as a monk until 1931, two years before he died. Instead he invented the role of the *Anagārika*, the person between the order of monks and the laity. The role of the political monk in Sri Lanka is one of the most striking aspects of Dharmapāla's legacy.

THE POLITICAL MONK

The colonial situation in Sri Lanka necessarily brought Christians and Buddhists into close contact, especially from 1815, when the British gained control over the whole island with its interior highlands, areas that guerrillas had long prevented from being occupied by European colonizers. This was the end of the turbulent

era of revolutionary wars and the beginning of British world-power. Hand in hand with stability and hegemony went the evangelical spirit that called for the abolition of slavery and the destruction of thuggee as well as the conversion of heathens around the world. The pragmatism and adventure of eighteenth-century imperialism were being replaced by lofty religious principles and a feeling of global responsibility.

British missionaries wished to convert the Sinhalese to Christianity, although their methods were different from those of their Dutch and Portuguese predecessors. The colonial situation had resulted in new social structures in Sinhalese society, which again had led to controversies and breaches within the Buddhist Saṃgha and to the rise of new ordination traditions. The beginning of the nineteenth century, then, saw tensions both between Buddhism and Christianity and within the Sinhalese religious establishment. There were two reactions to the internal and external challenges to Buddhism. Some monks withdrew from society to the forest, disgusted with worldliness, while others chose the opposite path and threw themselves headlong into the politics of religion.

The debate between Christians and Buddhists had been an important aspect of religious life in Sinhalese society at least since the substantive critique of Buddhism set forth by the Wesleyan missionary W. D. Gogerly in a book called *Kristiyāni Prajñapti*, or *Christian Institutes*, published in 1848.[1] From the 1860s Buddhist monks acquired printing presses and started the production of tracts and pamphlets in defence of their religion. Indeed, it was in connection with the establishment and early activities of the Buddhist presses that the most important figures in the Buddhist revival came to the fore: monks who were to be the ideals of both the theosophists who arrived in Sri Lanka fifteen years later and their most ardent pupil, Dharmapāla. The most formidable of these political monks was Mohoṭṭivatte Guṇānanda.

Guṇānanda was born in 1823, baptized and given the Christian name Miguel.[2] His family lived in Balapitiya, on the south-west coast, in an area where the Salāgama caste was predominant and the Amarapura Nikāya was strong. The Amarapura Nikāya was

[1] Young and Somaratna (1996), 44–5.

[2] For information on Guṇānanda I rely on Young and Somaratna (1996), 127 ff and Malalgoda (1976), 220 ff.

one of the new ordination traditions (*nikāyas*) that challenged traditional religious authority in the Buddhist Saṃgha during this period. To some extent, new ordination traditions in the colonial period embodied a revolt in terms of caste. The Goyigama caste is the landholding class of Sinhalese society. It makes up about half of the Sinhalese population. It seems that the Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka had been great landowners from early times and the Saṃgha's association with the landholding caste in general was the starting point for exclusivism: when the monks were Goyigamas, only Goyigamas could become monks. The direct reason for the conflict that led to the foundation of the Amarapura Nikāya was the refusal of the monks in the capital Kandy to give the higher ordination (*upasampadā*) to people who did not belong to the Goyigama caste. The three castes that challenged the religious authority and monopoly of the Goyigamas were the Salāgamas, the Karāve, and the Durāve. These lower castes were outside the sphere of control of the king in Kandy; they had their geographical base in coastal areas controlled by Europeans. The status of castes in the coastal areas had radically changed as a result of colonial rule. The Salāgamas were the cinnamon-pickers and, thus, were indispensable for the main activity of the Dutch in Sri Lanka. Their social position, wealth, and self-confidence had changed accordingly.[3]

Guṇānanda was initiated into the Buddhist Saṃgha—he most probably received the higher ordination and later stepped down to the status of novice to free himself of the restraints imposed by full monkhood—and went to Colombo in the early 1840s. There he took up residence at the Dipaduttamārāmaya temple in the multireligious Kotahena district of the city. In the 1850s he became the chief incumbent of the temple, which was still under construction and completed only in 1883. In the early 1860s Guṇānanda was starting to attract attention through preachings against Christianity. Some of these were of such a harsh nature that the Christian communities to whom he addressed his speeches were on the brink of answering the Buddhist agitator with violence on several occasions.

Guṇānanda was a brilliant speaker. He travelled from village to village throughout the south-west coast and the central highlands of Sri Lanka, speaking out against Christianity and defending

[3] This development has been well documented by Malalgoda (1976).

Buddhism. The Christian missionaries soon realized that he posed a serious threat to their work. The threat became more formidable when Guṇānanda in 1862 gained control of a printing press in Colombo, but again, this did not mark the beginning of religious rhetorical writing against missionaries and their challenge to Buddhism. Monks had for several decades produced traditional palm-leaf manuscripts (*olas*) as part of the debate. Neither was it the first printing press in the hands of Buddhists. A Buddhist press had been established two years earlier in Galle. However, the spirit in the publications of Guṇānanda's press in Colombo—the Sarvajña Press as he called it—was different from earlier examples. Guṇānanda's first publication, the *Durlabdhi Vinodanaya*, or *The Dispeller of Heresy*, came out in August 1862. This series was concerned with demonstrating that the God of the Old Testament was not a divine being but rather a bloodthirsty demon who accepted sacrifices and waged wars. Guṇānanda also looked for inner contradicitions in the Bible, much in the same way as Gogerly had pointed out the logical inconsistencies of the Pāli canon, and often relied on the writings of British and American anti-Christian secularists in his attacks on Christianity.

The Sarvajña Press continued producing and distributing anti-Christian material through the 1860s and 1870s. But although printed material had become an effective weapon against the missionaries, it was not enough. Guṇānanda continued to travel and give speeches, and several debates between Buddhists and Christians were held in this period. Of these debates one stands out as particularly important. This was the debate held at Panadure in 1873, which, according to Young and Somaratna, acquired in the popular imagination 'the magnitude of an almost cosmic and not merely epochal event in the renewal of Buddhism'.[4] Several thousand listeners attended the debate, which took place on 26 and 28 August. The Wesleyans had established a Bible school in Panadure in 1817 and although their missionary work in the area was largely unsuccessful, Panadure was an important foothold throughout the middle decades of the century. When David de Silva was appointed minister of the Wesleyan chapel at Panadure

[4] Young and Somaratna (1996), 156. For information on the Panadure debate I rely on ibid. 155 ff.

in 1873, the anti-Buddhist themes of his speeches met with resistance from local Buddhists. One source of opposition to the Wesleyan mission was an established Buddhist temple situated very close to the chapel at Panadure. An old but still controversial issue was the alleged incompatibility of the doctrine of *anattā*, no-soul, with the laws of *kamma*. On 26 June a challenge went out from the Christian side to debate this question. The challenge was accepted by the Buddhist leaders a week later and a date was set.

The debate took place on a large field in Panadure and at least 6,000 people gathered to see the clash between Buddhism and Christianity. In the middle of the field a preaching hall had been constructed for the occasion. The hall was partitioned and the two parties each had one half of the building at their disposal. Each side had eight hours to speak each day, four in the morning and four in the evening. The speeches were to be recorded and published after due corrections had been made. The two speakers were de Silva and Guṇānanda. De Silva chose to address the same issues and attack Buddhism in the same manner as missionaries had done since Gogerly's infamous book. This was not a very clever approach because the criticisms were already well-known to everybody. Thus, de Silva's lecture, based largely on internal contradictions in the Pāli canon, amounted simply to a repetition of offensive assertions about the consistency of Buddhist thought. Both Guṇānanda and the public mind were well prepared to refute such an attack. In addition to choosing a stiff and dogmatic argumentation, de Silva's style was not suited to his audience. He cited passages from Buddhist texts and revealed a certain erudition, but, as one commentator observed, he spoke as if his hearers were all a James Alwis or a Max Müller, and it was doubtful whether there were even thirty of the thousands present who could follow his language.[5] As a whole, the debate was a disaster for the Christian side and a great victory for the fervent and eloquent Guṇānanda. In the eyes of most people, the event was an affirmation of the appropriateness and importance of the political monk in the fight to restore pride and faith in the religion of the Sinhalese people.

[5] Quoted ibid. 162.

THE BLURRING OF TRADITIONAL ROLES

Guṇānanda's fierce anti-missionary activity and agitation of the masses through debates and printed material was something genuinely new in Sinhalese society. Guṇānanda's work as a political monk became an important model for the early formation of Dharmapāla's identity as a defender and reformer of Buddhism; his rhetorical skills were praised by the theosophists and the fierce monk naturally became the ideal of Dharmapāla as well. Moreover, Dharmapāla may well have felt that their destinies as champions of Buddhism against missionaries were woven together in the violent Kotahena affair, which will be related in due course.

Dharmapāla was a nationalist in the sense that he wished to build a collective consciousness for the Sinhalese people, and Buddhism would be the basis of their shared identity. In certain respects the life of Dharmapāla resembles the life of other religious leaders, like Guṇānanda. He had an inclination towards religion from childhood and chose to renounce the householder's life, although he received ordination only in old age. However, in important respects Dharmapāla was different. He never attempted to reform the Buddhist Saṃgha from within, and the sources of his motivation must be found in the political situation of the day rather than in such internal socio-religious factors as motivated the leaders of the new ordination traditions. But Dharmapāla was not simply a politician. He saw himself as a defender of the faith (*dharmapāla*), and a wandering religious renouncer (*anagārika*). He created a role between that of the monk and that of the man in the world.

This invention is highly significant for the general argument in this study about the development of South Asian religions in the late nineteenth century. Dharmapāla's new role between political life and monkhood strongly resembles the position that Vivekānanda created for himself in Bengali society. It supports the conjecture that the religious leaders of this period needed to create a new religious identity in which membership of the religious community was ascribed by birth and inclusive of all members of society. Dharmapāla and Vivekānanda lived out this new type of religious identity by taking for granted that they had the right to the highest truths of their religious traditions, while they continued to live politically active lives in the world.

The new and ambiguous role was assumed by others after Dharmapāla's death. For instance, a strange figure who acknowledged his debt to Dharmapāla was Tāpasa Himi, whose movement of *tāpasayo*, self-ordained ascetics opposing the established Saṃgha, figured prominently in newspapers in Sri Lanka in the early 1950s. Tāpasa Himi not only saw Dharmapāla as his primary inspiration, he believed that he was Dharmapāla's incarnation.[6] However, I believe one can detect a certain ambivalence towards the role of the *Anagārika* among the Sri Lankan Buddhists themselves. In 1949 Priyadarsa Sugatananda, himself an *Anagārika*, wrote an article called 'Anagarika Dharmapala: the Lion of Lanka', which appeared in the *Maha Bodhi*, the mouthpiece of the Maha Bodhi Society.[7] Summing up Dharmapāla's life he said that a man with such genius might have won fame as a politician or a man of letters; alternatively he might have retired from the world to seek his own salvation in a peaceful forest retreat. It is the recurrent theme of man-in-the-world and renouncer; it is the theme of Buddha and world-conqueror in traditional Buddhist cosmology. But, Sugatananda continues, Dharmapāla did neither. What did he do, then? The author leaves this unanswered.

One aspect of Dharmapāla's work concerned the collective identity of the Sinhalese nation. S. Amunugama has pointed out the importance of Dharmapāla's construction of an ethic for the Sinhala laity.[8] Dharmapāla had a feeling of responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the religious identity of Sinhala Buddhists. There was the need to create unity among the members of the nation across internal boundaries. The most obvious strategy was to erase the differences between monk and layman and diffuse Buddhist culture, which to a large extent had been the property of members of the religious elite, the Saṃgha. Thus he presented the Buddhist religion as a democratic and inclusive institution.

> The Blessed One made no distinction of Bhikkhus and Bhikkkunis, upasakas and upasikas. They were all to learn the *Pali Dhamma* and study it and proclaim it for the welfare of others. The consummation of the Brahmacariya life was not only for the Bhikkhu and the Bhikkhunis, but also for upasakas and upasikas. The door to Nibbana is open to all.[9]

[6] Carrithers (1983), 117, 130. [7] *Maha Bodhi*, Oct. 1949.
[8] Amunugama (1985), 697–730.
[9] Dharmapāla, *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 224–5.

There was always a distinction between monks and lay people in Theravāda Buddhist societies. Lay people were not expected to learn the *Pāli Dhamma* to the extent that the monks and nuns were, nor to lead a celibate life devoted to religion, and the door to Nibbāna was not open to them. Dharmapāla was aware of this, so why did he present Buddhist social history in the way he did?

Through the history of Sri Lanka the kings had ensured the maintenance of a legal-political community. The Buddhist religion may have formed an ethical basis for the common civic culture of the Sinhalese, but the Buddhist texts themselves take hardly any interest in the affairs of the world. The most obvious reason for this is that Buddhism originated as a salvation technique for those who were prepared to leave the world. Still, this is not an altogether satisfactory answer, because the religion of the Jains—in its origins closely related to Buddhism—provides detailed rules for the conduct of the laity (*śrāvakācāra* or *upāsakādhyayana* in Sanskrit). Obviously, the early Buddhists could not have foreseen the phenomenal geographical spread of their system from Aśoka's times onward, nor could they have had any notion of the vast spectrum of cultures onto which Buddhism was to be grafted. Earlier in the history of Sri Lanka the silence of the texts on lay ethics was not a problem. However, when the institution of Buddhist kingship was discontinued in 1815, the basis for national unity disappeared. Dharmapāla wanted to secure this national unity based on the Buddhist religion. In order to unite as one nation the Sinhalese needed a code of ethics for the laity. Therefore, Dharmapāla wrote the 'Daily Code', in which he gave a number of rules on how lay people should behave in their daily life.[10] Essentially, the code was an attempt to give a common ethical basis for a united Sinhala people.

But Dharmapāla also wished to transform the role of the monk in society. Francis Gunaratna, Administrative Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society observed, 'He wished very much to bring about a reformation in the Saṃgha and had more than once organized convocations of the leaders of the different Nikāyas but could not achieve anything of a fruitful nature for reformation of the Saṃgha must come from within and not from without.'[11]

[10] The code is discussed in Amunugama (1985), 719 ff.
[11] *Maha Bodhi*, Sep. 1948, 306.

Dharmapāla believed that the way to change what he saw as the disgraceful state of the Sinhala nation was to revive a pristine and pious mode of living. Religion—in the meaning of the *Dhamma* contained in the Pāli texts—had once been the property of the Saṃgha in Sri Lanka. Now, however, the survival of the Sinhalese nation depended on the unification of all its members around this great religious heritage. Thus, the monk would have to bear the responsibility of teaching the fundamentals of the Buddhist culture to the people.

By writing and speaking about the duties of the monk, Dharmapāla wished to imbue the members of the Saṃgha with a feeling of responsibility for the cultural survival of the nation. He wrote articles on rules for the *bhikkhus* and whereas many of his views fit the traditional role of the monk, others clearly show the innovative nature of his ethics. In a short treatise called *Precepts to be Observed by the Brahmacari* he says that the monk should make vows of the following kind: 'I surrender my life at the altar of Humanity. I shall practise charity and give to the needy; and help the poor by giving food, drink, clothes &c.'[12] The influence of a Christian education is evident in Dharmapāla's ideas of charity and we may see a striking parallel with Vivekānanda's practice of social service.

According to Dharmapāla, the monk should practise the godly attributes of love and equality as well as generosity, brotherhood, and altruistic service. Traditionally, the monk dedicated his life to his own salvation or, perhaps, to the memorizing of certain texts. Humanity was not an issue. The idea of charity and distribution of food was also quite alien in a social system where the religious specialist renounces work and the fires of the household, relying on others for his livelihood.

THEOSOPHY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

As described, Vivekānanda's ideas of religion were deeply influenced by Friedrich Max Müller and his comparative approach to the study of religion. The same strand of thinking was of great importance in the shaping of Dharmapāla's basic assumptions on

[12] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 229.

the topic, but although he too had contact with the great scholar and relied heavily on his work, it is necessary to look at the impact comparative religion had on Dharmapāla in conjunction with the seminal influence of theosophy. Especially in his early years, Dharmapāla perceived both Buddhism and Western ideas of religion through the peculiar prism of theosophy, and comparative religion was particularly prone to theosophical interpretation because Blavatsky and Olcott often sought to make Max Müller one of their academic apologists, largely against the will of the professor himself.

The Calcutta network created by the Theosophical Society was Dharmapāla's stepping-stone to India. Blavatsky and Olcott had sailed from the US in December 1878 and arrived in Bombay—via England and the Suez canal—on 16 February 1879. In the early 1880s the Theosophical Society established important contacts among the *bhadralok* of Calcutta. Olcott and Blavatsky's first visit to Colombo was in May 1880, and Dharmapāla's father brought his son to meet the eminent visitors.

By 1884 Dharmapāla's involvement in the Theosophical Society had become the most important affiliation of the young man's life. Olcott and Blavatsky had made arrangements for him to accompany them to the headquarters in Adyar. This was a crucial trip for Dharmapāla. His father, who was getting worried over the young man's lack of interest in worldly affairs, tried to make him stay in Sri Lanka. He had had a bad dream about the trip and did not want his son to travel. Dharmapāla found himself torn between his pious but worldly-minded family and the queen of occultism, Madame Blavatsky. He had already made up his mind that he would go with the theosophists, but he needed his father's consent. Blavatsky eagerly and successfully argued that the young man must come with her. Dharmapāla recalled that she threatened his father that if he was not allowed to go, he would 'surely die'.[13] Dharmapāla did not say whether Blavatsky meant this to be taken literally, but considering Blavatsky's strong esoteric and paranormal inclinations, we may assume that she was talking about some sort of spiritual demise rather than banal biological death. Anyhow, her arguments worked, he recalled: 'My father was frightened, and I was handed over to Madame Blavatsky, and she took me with her

[13] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 702.

to Adyar, where I stayed several days.'[14] The journey set the course for Dharmapāla's future work and it was Blavatsky who was the most important influence.

> One day calling me to her room, she made me sit by her and said that I need not take up the study of occultism, but that I should study Pali where all that is needed is found, and that I should work for the good of Humanity, and gave me her blessings. There and then I decided that henceforth my life should be devoted to the good of Humanity.[15]

Dharmapāla's trip to Adyar has been described as a *rite de passage*.[16] He was initiated into the inner circle of theosophists and accepted the lifelong task suggested by Blavatsky. It was a crucial turning point in his life.

However, from Dharmapāla's own account, one gets a strong impression that he had already been caught in the spiritual vortex of the theosophists and that he was destined for a career outside society. Moreover, Blavatsky and Olcott had hopes for the young man and would certainly not have given him up if he had been forced to stay at home in 1884. The next year he was able to begin putting his lofty ideas into practice. He decided to leave home to lead the Brahmacari life, and he moved into the Colombo headquarters of the Theosophical Society. 'I left the family and ever since I have worked with sincere devotion sacrificing all selfish interests for the welfare of humanity. Day and night I worked hard for the welfare of the Theosophical Society and Buddhism.'[17]

His contacts with the Society continued, and during the following years he returned to their headquarters several times to participate in the conventions of the Society. We may note that in 1886 he accompanied a monk by the name of Ilukvatte Medhaṃkara to Adyar. Medhaṃkara belonged to one of the new ordination traditions, the Rāmañña Nikāya, and he was a prominent reformist monk. The contact with such eminent religious characters was part of Olcott's plan to gather together the most influential leaders of the different ordination traditions and bring about a unification, or at least a reconciliation, for the sake of Buddhism as a whole.[18]

[14] Ibid. [15] Ibid.
[16] Amunugama (1985), 706; Obeyesekere (1975), 249.
[17] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 702.
[18] Wickremaratne (1969), 131 ff.

Dharmapāla's connection with the theosophists was not always to his benefit. Many of the European scholars of the day—Max Müller, Rhys Davids, and others—felt sympathetic towards the revival of Buddhism, but were critical of the theosophists. Dharmapāla's connections with Olcott and Blavatsky were seen as detrimental to the cause of the Maha Bodhi Society. Shortly after Dharmapāla had established himself in Calcutta with the help of his contact with Bengali theosophists, he went to the US to participate in the World Parliament of Religions. On the journey by boat Dharmapāla met the eminent scholar Sir Aurel Stein and described the meeting in his diary of 28 July 1893: 'Had a long chat with him about the M.B.S. He expressed his warm sympathy. He said that several other Orientalists would surely sympathise with us if we work independently of the T.S. But to have Col.Olcott as Director would mean that it is "Theosophic"! I said that we must have Col.Olcott.'[19]

Two years later, on 1 August 1895, he was again advised by an acquaintance that the appearance of Olcott's name was detrimental to the cause of the Maha Bodhi Society. However, Dharmapāla knew that the network created by the theosophists was of invaluable help to his own project. Later Dharmapāla would disengage from them, but at this time the Maha Bodhi Society's enterprise in India was still in a critical phase and it was the theosophists of the Bengali *bhadralok* who were his primary supporters in Calcutta.

Dharmapāla was well-read and his rhetoric—like Vivekānanda's—was permeated with historicist and semi-scientific arguments. However, Dharmapāla worked for a great cause and he was above all a pragmatist. He picked the arguments he could use and condemned those that went against his world view. It did not matter to him where the arguments came from. He fully realized the value of influential friends, whether theosophists or respected scholars. In 1891 Dharmapāla was reading Blavatsky's book *Isis Unveiled*. On 13 August, he quoted in his diary a lengthy passage from the book, where it was argued that Buddhism was taught from the beginning of time and that it was the most original and the best of religions.[20] The next day he wrote, 'Reading "Isis". That superficial readers fail to appreciate the intrinsic merits of

[19] *Maha Bodhi*, Nov. 1950. [20] Ibid. (1944) 190.

this wonderful work there seems no doubt. One should have a knowledge of comparative religion to appreciate it.'[21]

Comparative religion provided much of the intellectual foundation for Dharmapāla's thinking, as it did for Vivekānanda's, and the theosophist movement was an important channel for the conveyance of these ideas to South Asia. As seen in earlier parts of the book, Max Müller did much to open the eyes of the British to the treasures of Indian literature and religion. He was a key figure in the establishment of Sanskrit as a third classical language in Britain and he argued that the Christian world needed to study other religions and languages in order to understand their own properly. 'India has something to teach us', was the essence of his message to the British public.[22] The ideas of race that flourished in the same intellectual milieu became important elements in Dharmapāla's nationalist cosmology.

The marriage of comparative philology and ethnology took place in the influential work of James Cowles Prichard in the 1840s. The Prichardian ethnological paradigm consisted in the classification of peoples based on the classification of languages by the method of comparative philology.[23] In other words, the classification of languages was primary to the classification of peoples, and thus the power to create bonds of kinship across the globe lay with the comparative philologists, the foremost of whom was Max Müller. Max Müller created the idea of an Aryan race on the basis of the similarities in the classical languages of India and Europe. Such linguistic similarities had been known since Sir William Jones's work in the second half of the eighteenth century, but now Max Müller emphasized the kinship between Indians and Europeans. As T. Trautmann says, 'He took up the Aryan love story and told it with verve and passion.'[24] In the middle of the nineteenth century the classification of peoples on the basis of language came under increasingly heavy attack from a nascent science of race, the proponents of which wished to give complexion the primary role in the classification of people.

Max Müller's idea of Aryan kinship had considerable impact on how British and Indians perceived each other. They became Aryan brethren. Their differences in complexion were caused by the

[21] Ibid. [22] Symonds (1986), 105 ff. [23] Trautmann (1997), 133.
[24] Ibid. 172.

climate; underneath the same noble blood flowed in their veins. The Aryan idea was important to Dharmapāla. However, he wished to emphasize the kinship with the Aryans of the past—those who inhabited India and Sri Lanka—more than the relationship with Europeans. Indeed, for Dharmapāla, Aryanness became an argument to repel European influence rather than an impulse to embrace his British brothers.[25] In his attempt to establish the theory of Euro–Indian kinship Max Müller arrived at the theory that there were two different races inhabiting India: the Aryan and the Dravidian. Dharmapāla picked up the two-races theory. Again, he did not emphasize the kinship with Europe but rather the inevitable antagonism between Aryans and Dravidians.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CONFLICT

The importance of Dharmapāla in the formation of modern Sinhalese religious identity is indisputable, and with the considerable information that we have on Dharmapāla's life, it seems permissible to ask how his personality influenced the self-perception of the Sinhalese people. G. Obeyesekere has tried to answer this question. He believes that 'the case of Anagarika Dharmapala reveals ... the situation that arises when the identity crisis of an individual has significance for the identity problems of a larger ethnic group. ... Here is an instance where the needs of the individual matched the need of the group.'[26]

Dharmapāla's attempts to affirm his own identity did correspond to the needs of many Sinhalese, especially members of an emerging elite alienated from the traditional life of the village. But nothing in the writings of Dharmapāla seems to justify Obeyesekere's contention that his attraction to the religious life was motivated by an identification with his mother, an association of sex with incest and latent homosexuality.[27] Dharmapāla had strong emotional links to his family. The influence of his parents and

[25] See for instance his diary of 4 Dec. 1891, *Maha Bodhi*, 1946, 17.

[26] Obeyesekere (1975), 248, 250.

[27] Ibid. 247–8. Compare this psychoanalytic view of religious motivation with Melford Spiro's analysis of the personality of Burmese monks. He writes that monks often display fear of women, latent homosexuality, narcissism etc. See Spiro (1982), 338 ff, esp. 343 and n. 11.

grandparents was important in keeping him within what he called 'Buddhistic environments', whilst under pressure from Christian teachers to denounce his own religion, and his mother was, perhaps, particularly important to him. He also spoke of other elder women in his life, like Blavatsky and Besant, as mothers. Seeing himself as a monk, like Vivekānanda, he naturally referred to his female friends as sisters or mothers. Attributions of an Oedipus complex have no basis in the material available on either of them. Instead of forcing Dharmapāla's mind onto the Procrustean bed of psychoanalysis, it may be more useful to draw attention to some of the themes that Dharmapāla himself chose to recall from his life. Many psychologists have pointed out that the choice of episodes a person makes in order to construct a past is far from random, and such a selection is a valuable source of information about an individual's quest for identity.

From Dharmapāla's memories of his childhood, it is evident that the boy experienced a real conflict between the Buddhist culture of his family and the Christian culture that was imposed on him from outside. The Christian missionaries left a very strong impression on the young Dharmapāla's mind; in his recollections they mostly get the roles of brutes and bogeymen. All the schools Dharmapāla attended were run by missionaries, and he felt a strong pressure to reject his own tradition in favour of the colonizers' creed. He read the Bible every day learning long passages by heart, and he had to go to church and say prayers.[28] Many Sinhalese in fact converted to Christianity for pragmatic reasons. Christianity became the belly-religion of the Sinhalese, Dharmapāla said.[29] However, the different religious factions did not always co-exist peacefully. An episode that made a strong impression on the young Dharmapāla was an 'unprovoked murderous assault' made by Catholics on a Buddhist procession.

In March 1883 the Buddhists in Kotahena—a suburb of Colombo—celebrated the completion of an image house at the Dipaduttamārāmaya temple of the eminent Guṇānanda, the hero from the Panadure debate. In the same area was St Lucia's Cathedral, and the Catholics were celebrating Easter at this time. Both religious communities arranged processions in the streets. It resulted in a clash between the groups in which one Buddhist was

[28] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 698–9. [29] Ibid. 700.

killed and several injured. As mentioned above, Guṇānanda's provocations against the Christians of the area had led to tensions before. Dharmapāla's family were friends of Guṇānanda and, as residents of Kotahena and devout Buddhists, the most important lay-supporters of the Dipaduttamārāmaya temple. The attack on the Buddhist procession was therefore seen as an attack on the Hewavitarnes and the family members were deeply disturbed by the incident. Dharmapāla was withdrawn from St Thomas College, and so his English education was terminated at the age of 19. The conflict between Christianity and Buddhism and the self-asserting reaction to the onslaught of Christianity exemplified by Guṇānanda were important incentives for Dharmapāla's later work. A recurrent image in his cognition of the position of the Sinhalese nation in relation to other peoples was a sense of betrayal and isolation. 'The Sinhalese are isolated; they are between the Devil and the deep sea; they have no other land to go to, they have no ethnological relationship with any other existing race or country.'[30]

The isolation of the Sinhalese nation was described both in terms of the geographical position of their land and in terms of ethnicity. Dharmapāla spoke about the Sinhalese as a noble race surrounded by savage Tamils and brutal Englishmen.

A BUDDHIST MARTYR

In Dharmapāla's mind, the Sinhalese were marooned geographically, politically, and historically and his emphasis on conflict rather than kinship was typical of his attitude towards other ethnic and religious groups. The central themes in Dharmapāla's life were struggle and suffering. He saw himself as an instrument for a great cause and spent every minute of his adult life and all his energies on his work. He was loyal to his friends and supporters, and was bitter whenever he felt that somebody had let him down. He often felt let down. Indeed, a feeling of betrayal and loneliness is a recurrent theme in Dharmapāla's writings.

Dharmapāla was an indefatigable and zealous worker who had set himself an enormously difficult task. He had to build his organization, keep up intense lobbying for support in government

[30] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 534.

circles, and even fight legal battles in a foreign country. Obviously, there was ample scope for intrigue and enmity. A sense of betrayal was often present in Dharmapāla's personal relationships, especially vis-à-vis his old allies in the Theosophical Society, from whom he became alienated as the Society associated itself ever more closely with an exclusivistic Hindu nationalism. Dharmapāla wrote in his diary for 12 April 1898, 'Theosophists rose into prominence by borrowing Buddhist expressions. Their early literature is full of Buddhist terminology. Now they are kicking the ladder.'[31]

Bad feelings towards some of his associates can be traced back to the early period of his work. Dharmapāla was especially sensitive with regard to the people who had taken him under their wing when he was a young man, in particular Olcott and Blavatsky. In his diary of 12 January 1893, he wrote that Olcott pleaded guilty when he was confronted about his 'treacherous action' of writing against the Maha Bodhi Society. Discord did in fact arise between Olcott and Dharmapāla on a few occasions around the middle of the 1890s in connection with their work in the organization. Moreover, it is clear that in the years before the turn of the century, Olcott was increasingly torn between the cause of the Buddhists and the Maha Bodhi Society, and the cause of Hindu nationalism and theosophy. It will take a long time to efface the effects of Olcott's action, Dharmapāla continued in his diary, resolving to show understanding and love 'though he has proved treacherous to me'.[32]

The sour friendships in the theosophical circles would never heal properly. In a letter to one of his companions, Mr Gunasekera, of 20 February 1926, he related how the members of the Theosophical Society were against Buddhism but still exploited the religion to advance their own cause. 'Leadbeater and Besant steal everything from Buddhism and palm it off as their own', he said.[33] Other members of the theosophical and Buddhist scholarly circles of Calcutta came under attack, too. In an article in the *Maha Bodhi* of February 1908, Dharmapāla levelled intense criticism against the Sanskritist and Tibetologist Sarat Chandra Das for his disloyalty towards Buddhism. 'Now for the first time the very man who had extolled the great religion has commenced to use a sledge hammer

[31] See also Diary, 9 Nov. 1897. [32] *Maha Bodhi*, Feb. 1950.
[33] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 775.

to destroy the work he had started in 1892.'[34] Dharmapāla's verbal assault continued over four pages before he concluded, 'I had an idea that Rai Sarat was a scholar, and I am glad I have been disillusioned.'[35]

Dharmapāla saw himself as a martyr. During his work in India and his travels, he was constantly suffering from pain in the head or different parts of the body. According to his own diaries, he often went without food for days and suffered from chronic insomnia. He was frequently seriously ill and received treatment. Suffering became part of his personality and he accepted it as a natural by-product of his great struggle. For instance, in June 1895 he was suffering from jaundice and he complained about pain in the head and body. On 4 June he wrote, 'What a life is mine! Full of anxieties and misunderstood by the people. Physically and mentally suffering.'[36] But his own health was of secondary importance, he insisted, and he found comfort in his great mission. 'The Lord of Compassion suffered for the sake of the World. I too will suffer.' Dharmapāla's Christian education surfaced in his martyr ideal. His work in the Maha Bodhi Society was depicted as a heroic one-man struggle against formidable obstacles and enemies. 'Succeed or die for the great cause' was his motto. In his diary of 3 May 1893, he complained, 'It is no easy work to carry on altruistic work when one has no true friends.'[37] This was shortly after the opening of the Maha Bodhi Society in Calcutta and just before his departure to the US. In reality, as he acknowledged elsewhere, this was a period of massive support from loyal friends in Calcutta, without whom he would never have got anywhere with his great project in India.

Although he liked to present himself that way, it was simply not the case that he did not have friends or supporters. The struggle to get a foothold at Bodh Gayā lasted for many years and without the support that Dharmapāla received from friends and co-workers in Calcutta, the successes that he enjoyed would have been unthinkable. The relationship between Dharmapāla and his Bengali friends was essential to his work and the mental kinship he felt with them was as important to him as his Sinhalese background. 'The same love I have towards my own countrymen I

[34] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 787. [35] Ibid. 788.
[36] *Maha Bodhi*, Oct. 1953, 360.
[37] Ibid. Sep. 1950.

have for the Bengalees', he said.[38] Dharmapāla's relationship to Bengalis had had a flying start when he arrived in Calcutta in 1891. He had met Neel Comul Mukherji, a Babu who was holding the post of Secretary of the Bengal Theosophical Society. Dharmapāla recalls in the *Maha Bodhi* of 1907:

> As a perfect stranger, I came to his house on a Saturday in March 1891 from Buddha-Gaya on my way to Burma.... It was a case of love at first sight, and I who came expecting Babu Neel Comul's hospitality for a couple of days, found in the son and father the acme of human kindness; and they treated me with so much love that I was compelled to prolong my stay for one full week, and in that brief period he introduced me to several of his friends, among whom was the Editor of the *Indian Mirror*.[39]

According to Dharmapāla, the sympathy and love shown by Neel Comul Mukherji and his son from that day made possible 'the utopian idea' of the resuscitation of Buddhism in India. Dharmapāla's account of Neel Comul is bursting with admiration for his friend's optimism, loyalty, truthfulness, and great abilities as a businessman. An important contact was the Editor of the *Indian Mirror*, Norendranath Sen, who placed the columns of his newspaper at Dharmapāla's disposal. Dharmapāla, who struggled against great odds to establish the journal of the Maha Bodhi Society from 1892, realized the importance of reaching the public with his message, and through his position on the *Indian Mirror*, Norendranath Sen became perhaps the most important supporter of the Buddhist cause in Calcutta. Through Neel Comul, Dharmapāla also became acquainted with the prominent Tagore family. Neel Comul's wife had relatives among the Tagores and his brother had married the sister of the great writer Rabindranath Tagore, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The Tagore family was important in the formation of the Brahmo Samāj, the religious society founded in 1828 by Rammohan Roy. Rabindranath's father, the conservative and contemplative Debendranath Tagore, took over the leadership of the Brahmo Samāj from his father, Dwarkanath Tagore, in 1843. After the social reformist Keshub Chandra Sen joined the Brahmo Samāj a split occurred in the organization. Keshub Sen, the leader of the new Brahmo Samāj of India from 1866, had a profound interest in Buddhism, and in the opinion of certain scholars Sen was the main

[38] Ibid. 1945, 16. [39] *The Maha Bodhi Centenary Volume*, ed. Rahula, 45.

influence on Dharmapāla to start the Maha Bodhi Society.[40] Although a direct influence is out of the question (Keshub Sen died in 1884 and Dharmapāla does not mention him as an important impulse for his own work), it is clear that the Brahmo milieu in Calcutta was quite receptive to ideas of Buddhist revival. Another eminent Bengali supporter of Dharmapāla's cause was Sir Asutosh Mookerji, who was President of the Maha Bodhi Society from 1916 to his death in May 1924. In a memorial article in the *Maha Bodhi* Dharmapāla wrote, 'He was at heart almost a Buddhist, he openly confessed his love to the Lord Buddha, and was always prepared to help the cause of Buddhism.... He prided himself on being a Brahman in its true Buddhistic significance and we venerated him as such.'[41]

As the man described by Dharmapāla as having the greatest brain power and breadth of heart in the whole of India, Mookerji, the lion of Bengal, was a most valuable supporter of Buddhism. His son, Dr Syama Prasad Mookerji, was likewise President of the Maha Bodhi Society of India and fulfilled his duties with great zeal. Other eminent Bengalis, like Surendranath Banerjea and Bepin Chandra Pal, had deep sympathies with Buddhism. But this was a time of growing Hindu nationalist feelings and not everybody had the generosity to include Buddhism in their idea of the Indian nation. The support from the Bengali intelligentsia was never unanimous. Olcott put his personal prestige on the line for Dharmapāla in Calcutta and spoke about the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism, but the rising tide of an exclusive Hindu nationalism made the associations with Buddhism ever more delicate and costly to uphold. When Annie Besant—who did not conceal her preference for Hinduism—became the leader of the Theosophical Society, the course was set for the disentanglement of Buddhism from theosophy.[42]

PROTESTANT BUDDHISM

The religious and political views and attitudes professed by Dharmapāla were a product both of a history of socio-religious

[40] Kopf (1979), 252.
[41] *The Maha Bodhi Centenary Volume*, ed. Rahula, 47–8.
[42] Wickremaratne (1976), 62–79.

change in Sinhalese society and of the particular influences that shaped his mind at a young age, of which the theosophists were of fundamental importance. Moreover, one must remember that Dharmapāla, like all English-educated Sinhalese, grew up with one leg in the public world of Christianity and the other in the private world of Buddhism. R. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere have argued that to accept both Christianity and Buddhism involves cognitive inconsistency and that many educated Buddhists therefore displayed a schizoid attitude to religion.[43] On the other hand, the ability to facilitate mutually exclusive or at least very different systems of religion, ritual, or magic, which serve different purposes in different situations, is a hallmark of Buddhism as well as of Indian religions in general. Problems of inconsistency may have been symptoms of the new ideas of religion in Sinhalese society. Indeed, religion had become universalistic and exclusive.

But before summing up the essence of the new idea of religion that constituted a premiss for the work of Dharmapāla, a brief look is necessary at the social group in which his programme and its basic assumptions were most readily accepted. The sociological development in Sinhalese society contained, if not a close parallel, at least a functional equivalent to the anglicized elite of Calcutta. The colonial situation, and in particular the monopoly of English education as a channel to coveted jobs, led to the rise of a Sinhalese middle class, a process that has been described as the embourgeoisement of Sinhalese society.[44] It was in this middle class that Dharmapāla's ideas were able to spread. Dharmapāla primarily influenced a Buddhist entrepreneurial class emerging in the cities and the village intelligentsia, initially the schoolmasters created by the colonial regime. Members of these groups were often self-consciously Buddhist. While many of them perhaps lacked the education to move up to the top professions in the bureaucracy, they wished both to adjust to the modern society of business and administration and to differentiate themselves from the peasants of the village, and this made them receptive to Dharmapāla's Protestant ethic. The new middle class was pivotal in the religious transformation in Sinhalese society. Gombrich and Obeyesekere sum it up this way, 'Sociologically viewed, Dharmapāla's social

[43] Gombrich and Obeyeskere (1988). [44] Ibid. 207.

reform provided a value system to a new class, an emerging bourgeoisie.'[45]

What were the basic traits of the Buddhism professed by Dharmapāla? The members of the emergent middle class had ideas about religion in general and Buddhism in particular that were to a large extent based on the religious outlook of Protestant Europe and the US. One of the most important traits of Dharmapāla's Buddhism was the blurring of the traditional roles of monk and layman, a process already described in some detail.

It has been noted that the form of Hinduism developed by Vivekānanda might be called 'Protestant' in the limited sense that it stressed the universal right to access to religious truths and a rejection of the traditonal authority of the priests. Of course, one may question the use of terms like 'Protestant Hinduism' and 'Protestant Buddhism'. The Protestant Buddhism of Sri Lanka was certainly not a simple amalgamation of traditional Theravada Buddhism and an ideal Weberian Protestantism.[46] Nevertheless, the concept of Protestant Buddhism does highlight some of the essential features of the Dharmapāla's religion. His Protestant Buddhism was about the right of lay people to engage in the high soteriological religion and to strive for *nirvāṇa*, although the access to basic religious texts was in practice far more restricted than in Protestant Christian countries. A corollary of this emphasis on individual religious responsibilities was a privatization and internalization of religion. Traditional Indian religion is often said to stress orthopraxy, right practice, which basically means participation in the prescribed rituals, whereas the modern strand of Buddhism rather emphasized piousness in private life and the personal aspects of religion. In Protestant Christian fashion the locus of religion for modern Sinhalese Buddhists shifted from religious action in a collective context to private religious contemplation and self-scrutiny. To Dharmapāla personally, this focus was a source of grave feelings of responsibility and a cause of his martyr-like self-castigation.

The introduction to this study discussed the traditional Indian type of religious identity, which could be split into different

[45] Gombrich and Obeyeskere (1988), 215.

[46] Prothero (1995). Prothero asserts that the Protestant Buddhism of Olcott was rather a 'messy mix', which included important Western elements such as modernism, metropolitan gentility, and academic orientalism.

identities according to context. In Hinduism, the individual could have at least three distinct types of religious identity: first, the social religious identity defined by class and caste; secondly, the sectarian religious identity defined by the family's affiliation to a devotional tradition centred on a deity; and, thirdly, there was the option of a personal religion defined by one's chosen guru. In traditional Sinhalese society too an individual could have different religious identities according to context, although the case was obviously different from Hinduism. One important distinction was that between Buddhism, directed towards salvation, and the spirit cults, used for mundane purposes. The modern Buddhism was universalistic and exclusivistic; it demanded that religion should fill every sphere of the individual's life and guide his or her actions and behaviour in any context. The layman should permeate his life with religion, as advised in Dharmapāla's code of conduct for the laity. Moreover, the life of the pious Buddhist should incorporate daily Buddhist prayers, regular visits to the temple, and the observing of the five or eight precepts. It was an incorporation and adjustment of Victorian values into Sinhalese society and the result was an ethic of this-worldly asceticism.[47]

[47] Gombrich and Obeyeskere (1988), 215.

4

Anagārika Dharmapāla and the Politics of Religion

Anagārika Dharmapāla applied his new ideas of religion to a political programme. His prime concern was, as S. Amunugama has described, the building of a tightly knit politico-religious group.[1] However, at the same time Dharmapāla was obsessed with the Buddhist sites of India and he spent most of his adult life in the struggle to take control over these places. Bodh Gayā was the most important focus for his work and an account of its immediate historical background is relevant to the narrative of events that took place.

BODH GAYĀ

During the winter of 1811/12 Francis Buchanan was travelling through Bihar carrying out a survey of the districts of Patna and Gayā for the government of Bengal. On 9 December his itinerary took him from Gayā towards Bodh Gayā, or Buddh Gya as he calls it in his journal. Leaving Gayā, Buchanan surveyed a land dotted with ancient ruins, crumbled temples, dried out tanks, and canals. On his way he ran into a group of Hindu worshippers staying in a strange convent built of stone. The *Mahant* welcomed him into his sanctuary and explained that the buildings of the place were set up by different *Mahants* at different times and that the material was taken from ruins at the place. The *Mahant* took the guest to a storehouse and showed him a number of Buddha statues along with other figures of Hindu deities and supernatural beings. These had been taken from ruins in the vicinity when the builders had collected bricks and stones. Some of the figures had inscriptions which Buchanan believed to be in Pāli. As he continued his journey towards Bodh Gayā he saw enormous piles of stone all around

[1] Amunugama (1985), 720.

which he realized must be the remains of ancient temples and stūpas. On further inspection of some of these heaps Buchanan found broken statues of different sizes and shapes buried under the debris. Many of them were Buddhist figures. Buchanan relates:

I then took a view of Buddh Gya, accompanied by a Rajput who has been converted to the doctrines of the Buddhs by two officers dispatched by the King of Ava to visit the holy places of this vicinity and to bring home an account of their state. He says that the sect so far as he knows has become perfectly extinct, and that no books relating to it are now procurable in the country.[2]

Buchanan's journal gives a picture of Bodh Gayā as the grave of an ancient civilization. Buddhism is perfectly extinct, as his guide tells him, and this has been the case for several centuries. But a puzzling fact emerges: his guide calls himself a Buddhist and claims to have been converted by royal inspectors from Ava—the capital of Upper Burma.

The Burmese kings were often very devout Buddhists and inscriptions from Bodh Gayā reveal that the place has had visitors from Burma at several times over the last centuries. King Bodawpaya, who ruled Upper Burma in 1781–1819 and whose officers probably converted Buchanan's guide, was well known for his religious fervour. He saw himself as the future Buddha Maitreya and a great *Cakravartin* (a world conqueror), and these ideas brought him into conflict with the British in India as well as with the Arakanese and the Thai.[3] In spite of the hostile relations between the British and the Burmese during the nineteenth century—tensions that resulted in large-scale war and the establishment of British Burma in 1885—the Burmese kings kept sending emissaries to Bodh Gayā.

At this time the British government had started taking steps for the preservation of ancient Indian monuments. Officers had started to collect inscriptions and describe buildings early in the nineteenth century. In the early 1830s some inscriptions from Bodh Gayā with translations appeared in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and in *Asiatic Researches*. There was in general a marked increase in archaeological writings from about this time.[4] A main character behind this increased interest was James Prinsep, who was

[2] *Journal of Francis Buchanan*, ed. Jackson, 55.

[3] Hall (1981), 625; Bechert (1966–73), ii. 5.

[4] Chakrabarti (1988), 32.

Secretary of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta 1832–8 and whose name is first of all associated with the deciphering of the Brahmi script and the reading of Aśoka's inscriptions. Attempts at more systematic work on Bodh Gayā were made in the 1840s. In 1846 Major Kittoe was appointed Archaeological Surveyor to the Government of India and immediately directed his attention towards the district of Gayā. He was able to collect a large number of drawings, inscriptions, and sculptures from the area, but died before he could present his findings in a report.

General Alexander Cunningham was undoubtedly the most important person in British Indian archaeology in the middle of the nineteenth century with respect to the Buddhist sites of Bengal. He visited Bodh Gayā in 1861 and again in 1871 and published his research in the form of both articles and in archaeological survey reports. At this time Cunningham was already an accomplished archaeologist who had contributed to Indian archaeology since the 1830s with architecture as his specialist field. After his first visit to Bodh Gayā, Cunningham recommended that excavations be initiated around the great temple, and Major Mead was appointed to carry out the work. Cunningham had become the Archaeological Surveyor in 1861 and he had immediately started working for the implementation of a systematic programme of preservation of monuments in different parts of India. Cunningham's programme consisted first of all in making detailed descriptions of monuments by measuring, mapping, drawing, photographing, and copying inscriptions. His own detailed measurements and meticulous drawings of the Maha Bodhi temple are the best example of his approach. The need for more active methods of preservation—excavations and repairs—could be judged in each case. Such measures were not felt by Cunningham to be a feasible approach to the temples and tombs scattered over the subcontinent from Cape Comorin to Kashmir. His government agreed. Cunningham's suggestions involved a minimum of expense and were welcomed by the Viceroy, Lord Canning.[5]

The Burmese King Mindon contacted the government of India in January 1874 expressing his wish to carry out a programme of repair on the decaying structures of the Maha Bodhi temple, to prop up with masonry the weakened Bodhi Tree, and to build

[5] Chakrabarti (1988), 57–8.

a monastery on the spot for the accommodation of up to twenty Buddhist monks.[6] The communications between the Hindu *Mahant*, the Burmese ruler, and the government, which, as always, tried to take the position of enlightened and impartial arbiter in religious affairs, went smoothly and in January 1877 a Burmese delegation arrived at Bodh Gayā. They had made a detailed agreement as to the mandate for their work at the site with the *Mahant*, Hem Narayan Gir.[7] They were to carry out their repairs under the guidance of the *Mahant* and they were to take care not to cause disturbance to the Hindu community at the place or to cause damage to any of the surrounding buildings and structures that were in use by the *Mahant* and his following.

However, the motivation of the Burmese delegation was fundamentally different from that of the British archaeologists. So were their techniques of restoration. Just after the arrival of the Burmese, Rajendralal Mitra received a letter from Sir Stuart Bayley, Secretary of the Government of Bengal, asking him to go to Bodh Gayā to give the pious visitors such guidance as might prevent serious injury being done to the temple. The Burmese were building valuable antiquities into walls and sticking foolish heads onto torsos, Bayley complained.[8] Mitra was the right man for the job. He had supervised such work at Bhubaneswar in 1868–9 and had written *The Antiquities of Orissa* in two volumes.[9] Mitra was a Sanskrit scholar, prolific academic writer, and journal editor. He occupied various positions in the Asiatic Society from the middle of the century and he was now the first Indian archaeologist to be employed by the British in their projects of preservation. Mitra is an excellent example of the educated Indian who had a completely European perception of history. Both because he was engaged in political work and because he edited periodicals read by a general public, he was important in disseminating this world view to his countrymen.[10]

[6] Trevithick (1999), 648–51; Trevithick (1988), 1 ff.

[7] This agreement, dated 11 Feb. 1877, is reproduced in *The Budh-Gaya Temple Case* (1895), 107–8. The document was presented in a court case against Dharmapāla by the *Mahant*'s people in order to demonstrate that the *Mahant* was recognized as the lawful proprietor of the temple by the King of Burma.

[8] Mitra (1878), p. iii. [9] Chakrabarti (1988), 99.

[10] For instance, Mitra's thoroughly anglicized views of Indian history influenced Bhāratendu Hariśchandra, the prominent Hindi writer and nationalist of Banaras. Dalmia (1997), 132–3.

Mitra arrived in Bodh Gayā the following autumn and started collecting material which he presented in his reports. However, the enthusiasm of the Burmese had already taken its toll. If stricter measures had been taken to control their activity from an early stage, their excavations could have thrown much new light on the history of Buddhism and of Buddha, according to Mitra. Now, the opportunity had been lost.

The Burmese gentlemen were doubtless very pious and enthusiastic in the cause of their religion, but they were working on no systematic or traditional plan. They were ignorant of the true history of their faith, and perfectly innocent of all knowledge of architecture and the requirements of archaeology and history; and the mischief they have done by their misdirected zeal has been serious.[11]

In 1880 the Maha Bodhi temple was in a ruinous condition and the British government now decided to start a programme of repair.[12] The Burmese were, of course, not the only ones to have modified the buildings and monuments of Bodh Gayā through the centuries. The place had been in the possession of Hindu *Mahants* for a considerable time and they had not felt any strong commitment to the preservation of ancient Buddhist architecture. When Rajendralal Mitra was inspecting Bodh Gayā for the government of Bengal, a *Mahant* by the name of Hemanātha Giri was the head of the Hindu establishment there. Hemanātha Giri was described by Mitra as an intelligent man, but not particularly well versed in the *śāstras*. He had a fine collection of Sanskrit manuscripts and employed the more intelligent among his disciples to copy the texts. Apart from this, the monks led a comfortable life feasting on rich cakes and puddings.[13] Hemanātha Giri was able to trace his predecessors far back and even claimed that the third of the *Mahants* at Bodh Gayā had been given ownership of the great Buddhist temple by the Mughal Shah Alum.

FINDING THE CENTRE

Dharmapāla knew what it was to be marginalized. He came from a small island at the periphery of India; he was a member of a small, disenfranchized community on the border of the British Empire; he

[11] Mitra (1878), 66. [12] Cunningham (1892), pp. v–vi.
[13] Mitra (1878), 6.

belonged to a religious tradition that was at the edge of recent Indian history. A constant feeling of marginalization burned in Dharmapāla's mind. Therefore, he rapidly became obsessed with Bodh Gayā, which for him symbolized supreme centrality in a religious and historical sense.

On the morning of 22 January 1891 Anagārika Dharmapāla came to Bodh Gayā for the first time in his life. He had set out from the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar on 12 January and had gone by train via Bombay, Benares, and Gayā. On the way he had been taken good care of by friends and associates. In Bombay he met Mr M. M. Shroff, secretary of the Theosophical Society, and he enjoyed the company of the Sinhalese community in the city. In Benares he was entertained by Upendra Nath Basu, a rich and prominent theosophist who would be a valuable friend to Dharmapāla in his future work. In Gayā he was warmly received by the Bhattacharya brothers who also were prominent babus and would be important contacts in Dharmapāla's Indian network. Still, the journey had been exhausting, as the party always travelled on the cheapest class and the Indian trains were slower than they are today. It is typical of Dharmapāla's mentality that he later would have a disagreement with Olcott over the issue of travel. Olcott had been a colonel during the American Civil War of the 1860s and later combined a fundamental realism on issues of organization with his theosophy, and he insisted that Dharmapāla travel at least second class on trains and boats to keep up the respectability of the Maha Bodhi Society. Dharmapāla, on the other hand, saw sacrifice and self-inflicted pain as the key to success and preferred the hardship of sleeping on wooden benches to the respectable comfort of a more expensive class.

Dharmapāla's first tour in India was more a curious mix of modern style tourism and an archaeological survey than a pilgrimage, as A. Trevithick has described it.[14] Dharmapāla could write, for instance, about a visit to the Asiatic Society in Bombay, 'Went sight seeing.... Lots of Buddhist relics.'[15] In Benares he talked to holy men, spent several hours looking at temples, and took a bath in the Ganges river. Later Upendra Nath Basu took Dharmapāla in his carriage from Benares to Sarnath and

[14] Trevithick (1988) 51.

[15] Diary 16 Jan. 1891, *Maha Bodhi* 1943, 129.

the deer-park where the Buddha preached his first sermon and got his first disciples. Wherever he went, Dharmapāla was careful to visit famous and interesting sites. Besides temples and statues of all kinds he visited museums, libraries, and institutes, and he happily commented not only on the collections of artefacts or books but also on the cost and the architectural merit of the buildings themselves. It was the same attitude that motivated him to visit the Buddhist sites in Sarnath and Bodh Gayā.

But was he not a deeply religious man? In his own writings, Dharmapāla's religious fervour seemed to border—at least in the most intense periods—on madness. He said that he identified with the Buddha and wished to sacrifice his own existence for the sake of Buddhism. No wonder, then, that Bodh Gayā—the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment—became the object of affection for Dharmapāla. In his own straightforward logic, 'Should the Buddhists not feel for the hallowed shrine with seventeen hundred years of sacred associations with the same feeling as the Jews show to Jerusalem and the Moslems to Mecca?'[16] This reasoning reveals something fundamental about Dharmapāla's mode of thinking. He reasons that he should feel something for these particular archaeological remains because of their historical and religious significance. It is the rationalization of a pragmatic mind whose religious fervour often contained an element of deliberation. Moreover, Dharmapāla had a thoroughly anglicized, historicist attitude to the Buddhist remains of Bengal. Bodh Gayā was a place on the map of India; the Buddha's enlightenment was a point in India's history; Buddhism was a religion that could be compared with Judaism or Islam. The scheme of comparative religion was indeed compelling. However, the thorough historicization and relativization of Buddhism could not strangle Dharmapāla's intense religious feelings and the visit to Bodh Gayā was a turning point in his life. He described the crucial seconds when he bowed to the throne of the Buddha in the following way: 'As soon as I touched with my forehead the Vajrasana a sudden impulse came to my mind. It prompted me to stop here and take care of this sacred spot—so sacred that nothing in the world is equal to this place where Prince Sākya Sinha gained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.'[17]

[16] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 625.
[17] Diary 22 Jan. 1891, *Maha Bodhi* 1943, p. 131.

The crucial impulse, however, was not as sudden as Dharmapāla felt it to be on that winter day at Bodh Gayā. There were two main influences directly relevant in the formation of the idea that formed the core of Dharmapāla's existence. First, the Buddhists of Burma took great interest in Bodh Gayā through the nineteenth century, and Dharmapāla saw himself as continuing the work of the Burmese.[18] Secondly, he never failed to acknowledge the influence of Sir Edwin Arnold, the author of the poem 'The Light of Asia' and supporter of Buddhism in the West, and his arguments for the Buddhist cause were often echoes of Arnold's words.

Arnold had visited Bodh Gayā in 1885 and had been grieved by the fact that the Maha Bodhi temple was in the hands of a Hindu *Mahant* who paid as little attention to its maintenance as to its sacredness. A few years later Arnold wrote an article in the *Daily Telegraph* arguing for the transference of Bodh Gayā to the Buddhists.[19] The Buddhist world had long forgotten their Jerusalem when he visited the holy place, Arnold informed the British public. Ignorant Hindu peasants were now performing their everyday rituals at this most sacred place and there were 'thousands of precious ancient relics of carved stone inscribed with Sanscrit lying in piles around'.[20] On his visit to Bodh Gayā in 1885—which turned out to be the starting point in the long process of negotiations and lawsuits—Arnold asked the *Mahant* in charge if he could take a few leaves from the sacred Bodhi Tree. The owner told him to take as many as he wanted. The tree was nothing to the Hindus. Ashamed at the indifference of the *Mahant*, Arnold plucked three or four dark shining leaves and brought them with him to Sri Lanka, where he found them prized, as he said, with eager and passionate emotion among the Buddhists. It was during his visit to Sri Lanka that the first plans to take back Bodh Gayā for the Buddhists were hatched. In Arnold's words,

> I gave utterance to the suggestion that the temple and its appurtenances ought to be, and might be, by amicable arrangements with the Hindu College and by the favour of the Queen's Government, placed in the hands of a representative committee of the Buddhist nations. I think there never was an idea which took root and spread so far and fast as that thrown out thus in the sunny temple-court at Panadure, amid the waving taliputs. Like

[18] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 619.
[19] The article is reprinted in ibid. 604–14. [20] Ibid. 607.

those tropical plants which can almost be seen to grow, the suggestion quickly became an universal aspiration, first in Ceylon and next in other Buddhist countries.[21]

Thus Arnold presented his work and travels in India as sowing the seeds of a universal Buddhist revival. His prime contact among the Sinhalese was the monk Weligama Sumangala. Having acquired a solid backing for the cause in Sri Lanka, Arnold started working to gain control over Bodh Gayā. He wrote to the appropriate representatives of the British government and he travelled to Japan to get support from leading figures among Japanese Buddhists. Arnold consulted Weligama Sumangala about his work and the relevant information often reached Dharmapāla in the form of copies of Arnold's correspondence with the Sinhalese monk. In August 1893, stopping over in London on his way to the US, Dharmapāla met Arnold for the first time. They went together to see the Secretary of State for India, Earl Kimberley, about the Bodh Gayā project.[22]

Arnold's work had a very profound impact both in the West and in Asia. His long poem about the Buddha, 'The Light of Asia', first published in 1879, was in fact enormously popular in Britain and the US and went through more than a hundred editions. The poem caused a great upsurge in the interest in Buddhism in Britain and was clearly one of the works that contributed most to the late Victorian construction of Buddhism, as P. Almond has shown.[23] Later Dharmapāla would seldom write about the beginnings of his Bodh Gayā project without mentioning Arnold's name and in summing up the essential literary works on Buddhism he always included 'The Light of Asia', which, moreover, was one of the all time favourites among theosophists. More importantly, we must credit Arnold with the very idea on which the Maha Bodhi Society was founded. It was Edwin Arnold who gave him the impulse to visit Bodh Gayā and work for its restoration, Dharmapāla said.[24] Dharmapāla knew the value of influential acquaintances and it is likely that Arnold's work made politicians and intellectuals in Britain more receptive to the demands of the Sinhalese.

[21] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 607–8. [22] Ibid. 619.
[23] Almond (1988) 1 f., Barua (1981), 81.
[24] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge 330, 725.

MAKING ENEMIES

Dharmapāla started his crusade immediately after this first visit. The initial step was to buy a piece of land at Gayā. On 17 August 1891 he wrote in his diary that he had finally got what he wanted. 'Now we can say that we have got a home in the sacred land. After an exile of nearly seven centuries we have again got a foothold.'[25] The real objective was, however, out of reach. On 27 October Dharmapāla went to see Mr Grierson, Collector of Gayā, about the Maha Bodhi case, and the unwillingness of the British to get involved is reflected in Dharmapāla's notes in his diary: 'Mr. Grierson says that the Temple is not under the custody of the British Government and that if the Buddhists want it it must be purchased from the *Mahant*. When asked to negotiate he declines on the score that he is an official.'[26]

The temple at Bodh Gayā was purely a case between the present owner and the potential buyers, Grierson argued. In fact, the ownership of the temple-land was extremely ambiguous. Mr Grierson expressed his concerns about the lack of clear decisions concerning the rights to the temple and the surrounding land in a letter of 6 May 1891, a few months before the meeting with Dharmapāla: 'I can find no paper in the office defining the position of Government in regard to the Bodh Gay Temple',[27] he complained. The government was, in theory, prepared to see the Hindu *Mahant* as the proprietor of the temple and the surrounding land, but at the same time the British were not prepared unconditionally to give up all claims. Grierson argued that the government had spent two lakhs (i.e. 200,000 rupees) on the restoration of the temple and therefore had certain rights, and in the spring of 1891 the government installed a custodian at Bodh Gayā who was informed of his 'peculiar and delicate position' vis-à-vis the *Mahant* and was instructed to treat the *Mahant* with the greatest respect and deference.[28] According to the custodian, Mr Grierson said on many occasions that the temple was in fact the property of the government.[29]

[25] *Maha Bodhi* (1944), 191. [26] Ibid. (1945), 162.

[27] Letter from Magistrate and Collector of Gaya, G. A. Grierson, to The Commissioner of the Patna Division repr. in *The Budh-Gaya Temple Case*, 63.

[28] Letter from The Superintending Engineer, Sone Circle, C. W. Odling, to The Executive Engineer, Eastern Sone Circle, repr. in ibid. 59. [29] Ibid. 60.

However, the careful hands-off attitude towards both the *Mahant* and the Buddhists was maintained by the British government over the next two years, which meant that the case was hopeless for the theosophists and Buddhists as long as the *Mahant* would not consent to their plans for a Buddhist takeover. As many writers have noted, the Buddhist revival in the 1890s was very much a creation of the theosophists, and the Bodh Gayā case is no exception to this. Colonel Olcott was a central person in the Maha Bodhi Society during these early years, and he exerted himself in the work to take possession of the Buddhist sites in Bengal against formidable odds.

During 1891–2 there was little movement in the case and the beginning of 1893, which would turn out to be an important and dramatic year, did not give any sign that the stalemate would come to an end. On 12 January Olcott arrived in Calcutta and was received by Dharmapāla, Narendra Nath Sen, and other theosophist friends. The main purpose of his trip was to promote the Bodh Gayā case to the indifferent British officials. He called on the private secretary of the Viceroy and the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bengal, Mr H. J. S. Cotton, as well as other high-ranking officials, but he did not achieve much. Neutrality was still the stance of the government, although this would soon change. As Dharmapāla noted after Olcott's interviews, 'The Government has no voice in the matter.'[30] The colonel also interviewed Mr J. D. M. Beglar, a former subordinate of General Cunningham who had supervised the restoration of the temple at Bodh Gayā carried out by the Bengal government. They agreed that Beglar should act as consulting engineer and archaeologist for their planned projects at Bodh Gayā. However, their agreements came to nothing as their plans could hardly be implemented in the present situation. Olcott's diaries reveal that he was not happy with Dharmapāla's handling of the Bodh Gayā case. He would later withdraw from the work.[31]

Olcott continued to exert himself for the Buddhist case through the spring of 1893. On 4 February he went with Dharmapāla to Bodh Gayā and on arriving they found that one of the monks stationed in the guest-house had been attacked and injured by the *Mahant*'s people. A police investigation was initiated, but the case had to be abandoned when the monks refused to bear witness out

[30] Diary 16 Jan. 1893, *Maha Bodhi* 1950, 70.   [31] Olcott (1932), 7.

of concern for the attackers. Olcott called on the *Mahant* and interviewed him on the subject of transferring the temple to the Buddhists. However, the *Mahant* remained as deaf as ever to his appeals and refused the most liberal offers that the colonel could come up with.[32] The next day Olcott travelled on to Sarnath to inspect the ruins and further the case of the Maha Bodhi Society there.

While working from their base in Calcutta, the Maha Bodhi Society constantly tried to rally the much needed support of Buddhists in other countries, most importantly Japan and Burma. The changing attitude of the British government was felt for the first time in the beginning of March 1893, when some wealthy Burmese offered a large sum of money for the purchase of the temple and the surrounding land.[33] The obscurity and vagueness surrounding the legal status of the land at Bodh Gayā was a source of confusion and problems, but at the same time it was the only hope that the Buddhists had. If the land had belonged unambiguously to the *Mahant*, Dharmapāla and Olcott could have done absolutely nothing, but in March the question of the renewal of the lease came up and this was the opportunity that Dharmapāla and Olcott were waiting for. Now, with the Burmese money on offer, the case seemed stronger than ever. The proceedings went smoothly until the government of Bengal, or more exactly Chief Secretary Mr H. J. S. Cotton, came to know of Olcott's scheme and intervened with an order against selling the land to the Buddhists. What is more, it turned out that the wealthy Burmese who had offered financial assistance were about to lose their money in a business debacle. Still, the case dragged on. Only four months later, at the end of June 1893, there was again an offer from Burma to put up the money for the purchase of Bodh Gayā. Dharmapāla was in Burma from 16 May to 15 June in order to raise money from Burmese Buddhists for the lease of the Bodh Gayā land and his toil seemed to have paid off. This time Olcott was understandably suspicious, however, and his caution turned out to be warranted as it soon became clear that the pious Burman wished to buy the site for himself and had really no intention of supporting the work of the Maha Bodhi Society.

At the end of January 1896 Olcott received a telegram from Dharmapāla. There was now an opportunity to buy a piece of land

[32] Ibid. 11. [33] Ibid. 31–2.

at Bodh Gayā adjacent to the temple land itself and Dharmapāla was understandably excited about the thought of getting his hands on such a property. Although Olcott had his hands full with the theosophical work at Adyar, he was still connected to the Maha Bodhi Society as an honorary adviser. When he received Dharmapāla's telegram, Olcott immediately recalled his colleague Dr English from Colombo to replace him at Adyar and bought tickets for the boat to Calcutta. He sailed from Madras on 24 January and arrived in Calcutta three days later. The next day Olcott fell ill, but was nevertheless able to discuss the Bodh Gayā issue with Dharmapāla from his bedside. Besant, Upendra Nath Basu, and Dharmapāla's loyal pleader, Nunda Kissore Lal, among others, were brought into the discussion, which resulted in a decision to buy a house in Gayā as a temporary residence for the Buddhist monks instead of purchasing the estate at Bodh Gayā that touched on the temple enclosure.[34]

Olcott was entrusted with the actual purchase of the house in Gayā and on the 19 February he took the train from Howrah station, Calcutta, to Gayā to inspect the building. In the end, however, Olcott decided not to buy the house, but rather to build a new one on the piece of land purchased by Dharmapāla earlier. Dharmapāla had been very much in favour of buying the additional land at Bodh Gayā. Although the terms of the purchase were preposterous they had had a chance to get a firm foothold in the immediate vicinity of the great temple.[35] The land had been offered for sale at 85,000 rupees, which included a 30,000 rupee bribe, according to Dharmapāla. On top of this would come 3,500 rupees in yearly payments. Dharmapāla respected the decision of Olcott and Besant, and the fact that his disappointment at the course of events did not turn into resentment indicates that he realized the absurdity of the offer himself. Dharmapāla and Olcott spent time together every day during the following weeks and on 10 February Dharmapāla's mood changed from disappointment to excitement when he received information that the lease of the Maha Bodhi land itself was up for renewal. There was a short burst of activity until the beginning of April when Dharmapāla's hopes again were

[34] Olcott (1932), 459–60.

[35] Diary 27–9 Jan. 1896, *Maha Bodhi* Oct. 1954, 402. For a detailed account of the court case from different official sources see Trevithick (1988) ch. 5. Trevithick's account is largely the same as the one I give here, although more detailed.

shattered by the news that the *Mahant* would have his lease renewed for twenty years. To make matters worse the British government ordered the Buddhists to remove the highly contentious Japanese image of the Buddha from the guest-house at Bodh Gayā. The world had not fallen for Dharmapāla's Trojan horse placed in the heart of Buddhist India.

THE JAPANESE IMAGE

On the morning of 25 February 1895 Dharmapāla had arrived at the temple at Bodh Gayā accompanied by two Sinhalese monks and a layman. They carried with them an image of a sitting Buddha about 45 cm high, made of sandalwood and gilded. With the image came various paraphernalia: brass lotus flowers in a vase, a censer, candlesticks, and a certificate in Japanese stating the antiquity of the image, which again highlights the historicist world view of Dharmapāla and his co-workers. The Buddha image had been given to Dharmapāla by Buddhists of Japan and the sole intention of the Sinhalese party on this February morning was to install the image in the Maha Bodhi temple. They entered the temple and placed the image on the altar. Then they sent word to the government custodian of the temple, Babu Bipin Behari Banerji, who appeared on the spot six or seven minutes later. Dharmapāla entrusted the image to his care and the Buddhists started to light the candles. Eveything seemed peaceful until suddenly a large crowd of people entered the temple and approached the altar where Dharmapāla and the Buddhist monks were preparing the image. An angry mob pushed its way between the Sinhalese and the altar and ordered the immediate removal of the image and the paraphernalia. One of them started pushing Dharmapāla's shoulder and repeated the order in a loud and threatening voice. The government custodian tried to calm the situation, but then somebody climbed onto the altar and grabbed the image. The crowd snatched the candles from the hands of Sumangala, one of the Sinhalese monks, and then they carried off the Buddha image. The Buddhists did not try to resist, except verbally, and, according to Dharmapāla, they watched the removal of the image sitting in calm contemplation, indifferent to what was going on.

This episode resulted in a court case in which District Magistrate D. J. Macpherson found Jaipal Gir, Mahendra Gir,

and Bhimal Deo Gir, all disciples of the *Mahant* at Bodh Gayā, guilty of an offence under Section 296 of the Indian Penal Code of voluntarily causing disturbance to an assembly lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship and sentenced them each to go to prison for one month and to pay a fine of 100 rupees.[36] Macpherson's deliberations on the case were detailed and thorough, and yet one must conclude that he was biased in favour of the Buddhists. He accepted unconditionally their claims that they were engaged in religious worship and that the removal of the image and the obstruction of the lighting of candles were a grave offence and that their religious feelings were deeply hurt by the episode. The judgement of Macpherson was appealed to the Sessions Judge of Gayā, H. Holmwood, who basically agreed with Macpherson and upheld the conviction under Section 296, while he reduced the sentence to a fine because he could not see any purpose in incarceration and because all the accused had refrained from personal violence, as he said.[37] However, the case dragged on and was finally taken up at the end of August 1895 in the High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal, where both the presiding High Court Judges found that Dharmapāla and the Buddhists had not been engaged in lawful worship in the temple and that the *Mahant* had had the right to refuse the installation of the Japanese Buddha image. The defendants were acquitted. More interestingly, neither of the judges seemed to believe that Dharmapāla's intentions in entering the temple and installing the image were sincere, and in their summary of the case they often hint at the real motivation of the Sinhalese:

> The desire to enshrine the Japanese image in the upper floor of the Temple, where no image had been before, may have been very laudable from a purely religious point of view, but it is at least open to doubt whether his motive was purely religious and not to further his known desire to bring the Temple under Buddhist control.[38]

It is tempting to agree with the High Court Judges of Fort William. From Dharmapāla's explanations in court, one gets a strong feeling that the whole case was a game in which religious symbols were manipulated to further his struggle to get his hands on Bodh Gayā. Dharmapāla presented his case as an instance of

[36] *The Budh-Gaya Temple Case*, pt. 1, 153.
[37] Ibid. pt. 2, 17. [38] Ibid. pt. 3, 6.

religious discrimination. He took on the role of the righteous martyr and victim, the only role he really knew how to play. He asserted that his Buddhist worship had been obstructed in two ways. First, the image of the Buddha had been removed before the eyes of the pious Buddhist party while they were sitting in a religious posture and contemplating it. Secondly, the people had prevented the lighting of the candles around the image. According to Dharmapāla both the contemplation and the lighting of candles were essential ingredients of Buddhist worship and their prevention 'was a disturbance of a part and parcel of our religious worship'.[39]

How did the other party see the case? From the written statement submitted on behalf of the accused disciples of the *Mahant* Krishna Dyal Gir, we get a very different picture of the affair.[40] First of all it is clear that the Hindus at Bodh Gayā saw Dharmapāla as an imposter who used religious arguments to stake false and unjust claims. They simply refused to believe that he was a genuinely religious man who wished to practise his religion in the temple. The *Mahant* and his disciples believed that the attempt by Dharmapāla to install a new image in the Maha Bodhi temple was 'a mere ruse or pretext to acquire control over the Temple'.[41] Why could he not content himself with the image of the Buddha on the ground-floor of the temple, which, in his own words, was more than adequate for Buddhist worship and which in fact had been the object of his devotion and meditation not more than a month earlier, when he visited the temple together with his own mother and a party of forty Sinhalese pilgrims? Dharmapāla was not really interested in protecting his rights to worship, they said, but simply wished to obtain possession of the temple in an indirect way by creating a conflict and forcing through a criminal prosecution of the *Mahant*. Moreover, Dharmapāla was essentially the tool of other forces and did not represent the Buddhists of Sri Lanka.

> We believe that neither Dharmapāla nor the Maha Bodhi Society in any way represent the Buddhists; but that the whole agitation, which has for its object to oust the *Mahant* from the possession and control of the Maha Bodhi Temple, is being fomented and fostered by Sir Edwin Arnold and Colonel Olcott, neither of whom are Buddhists or connected with Buddhism.[42]

[39] Ibid. pt. 1, 3. [40] Ibid. 101 ff. [41] Ibid. 104. [42] Ibid. 106.

The Gayā district has always been an area of religious significance to different traditions. In addition to containing the most ancient of the holy sites of Buddhism and Jainism, Gayā has been a sacred place of Hindus for a very long time. All major Hindu deities have been worshipped there, but Viṣṇu has always been of particular importance. According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Viṣṇu killed the demon Gayā Asura at this place. The demon was so holy that the gods and goddesses promised to reside on his body. Gayā has important centres of pilgrimage like Phalgu, Viṣṇupāda, and Akṣayavat. In his account of the district based on observations made in 1811–12, Francis Buchanan described how the Hindu *Mahants* he met had collected Buddhist sculptures and used ancient Buddhist structures for their own worship. It could be argued that the appropriation of Buddhist images and emblems by Hindus is a typical feature of Hindu religiosity at Gayā in modern times, and that this seems to have been the case for a long time, possibly from before the seventh century.[43] Trevithick has pointed to the utter confusion that has surrounded religious symbols at Bodh Gayā for centuries. Buddhist statues were often interpreted as representations of Hindu deities and, more disturbingly perhaps, model stūpas, representations of Buddhist burial mounds, were naturally perceived as *liṅgams*, phallic symbols of Śiva.[44]

Such traditions were eagerly alluded to in court during the Bodh Gayā case. The Hindu disciples accused of interfering in Buddhist worship asserted that they 'believed, and still believe, that according to the Shastras Buddha is a Hindu deity'.[45] However, according to the testimony of independent observers the worship of the Buddha inside the Maha Bodhi temple simply was not a genuine part of Hindu religiosity at Bodh Gayā in the 1890s. The custodian under the Public Works Department of the government, Bipin Behari Banerjee, a witness in the case, told the magistrate of Gayā that during five years of residence only 300 feet from the temple and almost daily visits to the building, he had never seen Hindus worship in the Maha Bodhi temple.[46]

The *Mahant* and his men, however, realized that their claim to the temple would be much stronger if they could make people

[43] This is the argument in Vidyarthi (1961), 23–4.
[44] Trevithick (1999), 646.
[45] *The Budh-Gaya Temple Case* (1845), 105. [46] Ibid. 56.

believe that they had genuine religious feelings for the place and the best way to do this was to start worshipping the Buddha statue on the ground floor installed in agreement with the goverment. So they started decorating the image of the Buddha as a Hindu deity and claimed that this was the object of their devotion and their *pūjā* rituals. But the stratagem was soon laid bare. In the list of archeological sites made by the British government of Bengal we can read that during 1894–5 the image of the Buddha on the ground floor of the Maha Bodhi temple was altered by the *Mahant* 'for the purpose of showing that it is a Hindu and not a Buddhist object of worship'.[47]

Dharmapāla chose to fight his battle in the realm of religion because it was a region where government officials would feel alien, and the Hindus chose to meet him on this battlefield for exactly the same reason. They all knew that the British judges would tread carefully out of fear of hurting religious sentiments. To the British, religion was an obscure realm where nobody dared to demand complete rationality and accountability. Both the Buddhists and the Hindus chose a strategy by which they could hide behind the authority of religious tradition, and, conversely, the chief weapon of both sides was to try to explode the religious claims of the opponent and expose him as a fraud and a pretender. Religious symbols became base and unholy weapons in the struggle for Bodh Gayā.

Trevithick has suggested that British officials involved in the Bodh Gayā case exhibited an exaggerated concern for the possibility of religious conflict in order to legitimize intervention.[48] This seems a bit too suspicious: both Trevithick's own material and a large number of other sources testify to the fact that the British were genuinely concerned about religious antagonism and communal violence in India, no matter how much these problems might have been colonial constructions. Many modern historians have for a long time seen the British construction of communities driven by irrational and violent religious passions as part of a larger orientalist project, but these writings often treat the colonizers'

[47] *List of Ancient Monuments in Bengal . . . up to 31 August 1895*, 285–6. For a discussion of the argumentation in court over whether the Hindus could claim to make the Buddha an object of Hindu worship, see Trevithick (1988), 130ff.

[48] Trevithick (1999), 653.

knowledge of their Asian subjects as too much of a devious and deliberate strategy for legitimizing repression.[49] In the case of Bodh Gayā there is no doubt that both the Hindus and the Buddhists consciously exploited the ambiguous and troublesome status of religion, and the British officials come across as bewildered go-betweens rather than social engineers.

Apart from publicity and the focusing of Buddhist consciousness on India, Dharmapāla did not achieve very much through his struggle during the following years. Ten years after establishing the Maha Bodhi Society, Dharmapāla obtained the consent of the government to build a rest-house for pilgrims at Bodh Gayā. It consisted of ten rooms, a big assembly hall, and a corridor built like a cloister. There were also baths and a kitchen for travellers. Here Dharmapāla took up residence together with a couple of other Sinhalese monks and together they ran the rest-house. Dharmapāla estimated the number of pilgrims at this time—the first years of the twentieth century—at five or six hundred per year, from all over Asia, which means that a certain revival of Bodh Gayā might have been under way. But Dharmapāla had bigger ambitions than a rest-house: he wished, he said, to recall the period when ten thousand student-monks were gathered at Bodh Gayā to study the philosophical and psychological truths of their religion. He wished to establish a Buddhist college.[50] His grand plans were not welcomed by the government and in 1910, after seventeen years' work at Bodh Gayā, the Sinhalese were forced to withdraw.

Dharmapāla suffered a serious loss of prestige after he lost the case against the Hindu *Mahant* and although he continued working for the Buddhist cause in India, he would not live to see Buddhism re-established in Bodh Gayā. On 28 May 1953 the jurisdiction of the Maha Bodhi Temple was transferred from the Hindu *Mahant* to the Maha Bodhi Society with a colourful ceremony to mark the occasion. Dharmapāla's dream of an ecumenical centre at Bodh Gayā, with temples from the different Buddhist traditions of Asia, was realized only after his death.

[49] A good example of the type of research that seeks to deconstruct the orientalist discourse is found in Pandey (1998), 132–68.

[50] *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge, 691.

MISSIONARY BUDDHISM: THE LEGACY OF AŚOKA

Dharmapāla's work was not restricted to the South Asian scene. The political application of his religious ideas implied missionary activity that brought him to the West. The starting point for his missionary work was the Parliament of Religions in 1893, and his desire to spread Buddhism originated in the need to assert the position of the religious tradition of the Sinhalese in the comparative and historical framework defined by European scholars.

Explaining the origin of the plan for the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, the spokesman of the committee wrote that they had begun their work with the impression that a parliament of religions had never been assembled before. Their idea was unprecedented, it seemed. A letter from one Mr Dharmapāla, the General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society and mouthpiece of the Southern Buddhist Church of Sri Lanka at the Parliament, showed them to be wrong. 'Twenty centuries ago, just such a congress was held in India by the great Buddhist Emperor, Asoka, in the city of Pataliputra, modern Patna', Dharmapāla informed them.[51] The lesson of the congress had been universal tolerance and reverence towards all religions. He picked up the theme in his first speech in Chicago.

> When I read the program of this Parliament of Religions I saw it was simply the re-echo of a great consummation which the Indian Buddhists accomplished twenty-four centuries ago.... Go to any of the Buddhist countries and you will see the carrying out of the program adopted at the congress called by the Emperor Asoka.... I hope in this great city, the youngest of all cities, this program will be carried out, and that the name of Dr Barrows will shine forth as an American Asoka.[52]

The Buddhists had their great ecumenical council long ago, he continued. Now, it was the Christians' turn. The World Parliament of Religions would be the crowning work of nineteen centuries, and the twentieth century would see the teachings of Jesus carried out. But Dharmapāla did not come to Chicago to wish the Christian world good luck with their proselytizing into the next century. The most important result of the Buddhist council in

[51] Barrows (ed.) (1893), i. 8.
[52] Ibid. 95–6.

Pāṭaliputra was the missions sent to the different countries of the Indian subcontinent and perhaps even farther. According to the ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the great monk Tissa Moggaliputta, after the third council, sent missionaries to several places. The most important of the missionaries, the Emperor's own son Mahinda, went to Sri Lanka and converted the island to Buddhism.

In the same way, Dharmapāla came to the Parliament as an advocate of Buddhism, and in the diaries written during his journey he constantly spoke of himself as a Buddhist missionary to the US. In innumerable speeches and writings he made it clear that the influence of the West on Sri Lanka and on Asia in general had been of a purely negative kind. The examples that Christian missionaries had given the people of Asia were selfishness and brutality, the eating of meat and the drinking of alcohol. He called for the spread of Buddhism to counterbalance evil influences. Knowing that the alienation of Western leaders would not serve his cause, he chose his words with care when he addressed the audience in Chicago. Still, his missionary zeal shone through. A letter published in the *St Louis Observer* illustrates the impression he made on the Americans.

> With his black, curly locks thrown back from his broad brow, his keen, clear eye fixed upon the audience, his long brown fingers emphasizing the utterances of his vibrant voice, he looked the very image of a propagandist, and one trembled to know that such a figure stood at the head of the movement to consolidate all the disciples of Buddha and to spread 'the light of Asia' throughout the civilized world.[53]

An earlier chapter described Vivekānanda's ambitious ideas of converting the West to Hinduism. Dharmapāla's plans were no less grandiose. He arrived in the US on 2 September 1893, and over the following days the significance of his task at the Parliament grew rapidly in his mind. Two days later he wrote in his diary that he needed to decide what life he should take. 'I decide it now—Bodhisatva life. Pure life and work for Humanity.'[54] Dharmapāla identified with the Buddha and, in his mind, the first trip to the US became a parallel to the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree and the first wanderings and speeches in search of disciples.

[53] Barrows (ed.) (1893), 95. [54] *Maha Bodhi*, Jan.–Feb. 1951, 14.

On 6 September he had dinner at the Bartletts', home of one of the organizers of the Parliament, where he was served milk-rice and sugar. This was full of significance, Dharmapāla wrote in his diary, for it reminded him of the story of the Buddha's enlightenment, in which a village woman offered Prince Siddhārtha the same kind of food as he was sitting under the Ajapāla Tree just after his termination of severe mortifications.

During the Parliament sessions, which started on 11 September, Dharmapāla's religious fervour was expressed through notes in his diaries on the wonderful qualities of the Buddha and of Buddhism, and he wept on contemplating the compassion of the Buddha. On 18 September he read his paper called 'World's Debt to Buddha' at the Parliament. The day before had been his birthday and he said that he had begun a new life. He was completely intoxicated by the thought that he was bringing the message of the Buddha out to the world. It was the dawn of a new era, he wrote. The Buddhist mission to the US had started and on 24 September, Dharmapāla wrote in his diary, 'Admitted Bro. Strauss as an Upasaka of the Buddha's religion. Gave Pansil.'[55] In other words, Dharmapāla admitted the first American as a lay Buddhist and allowed him to take the five precepts.

The Parliament had gathered several representatives from India and Vivekānanda was clearly the most impressive character among them. During the following days Dharmapāla spoke with Vivekānanda about Buddhism and India, and mentioned that he wished to return to the US at a later stage to disseminate Buddhism. Vivekānanda was friendly and encouraging and told his Sinhalese colleague that Buddhism held a key role in the uplift of India. As already discussed, the two missionaries started out as friends with more or less the same ideas about the future of India and the role of Buddhism. Vivekānanda's attitude would change dramatically in 1897 when he visited Sri Lanka and encountered a Buddhism that was very different from the idealized religion that he had read about in books.

On 28 September the Parliament was over. Dharmāpala was completely exhausted after his excitement and fervent activity and he was overpowered by sadness and fatigue. At the beginning of October, Dharmapāla started on his way home via San Francisco.

[55] Ibid. 17.

On the way he meditated and had recurrent thoughts of himself as the saviour of humanity.

Like the other leaders described here, Dharmapāla was reacting to a need to affirm the cultural identity and worth of the people he represented. He saw religion as the essential aspect of Sinhalese culture. Professor B. K. Sarkar gave a speech called 'Dharmapala through Bengali Eyes' on All India Radio on 17 September 1948. He observed that Dharmapāla's missionary work in the world and his enterprises in Bengal were great achievements, but that the real significance of his achievements lay at a more fundamental level. For, he said, the work of Dharmapāla 'has pragmatically spelt the ushering into existence of a self-conscious Sri Lanka, a self-conscious India, and a self-conscious Asia'.[56] The successes of Dharmapāla and Vivekānanda, their travels and conversions in the West, their fame and their contacts with professors and politicians of Europe, the US, and Asia, were the outward manifestations of the worth of their own cultures; they were a boost to national pride. In Sarkar's words, 'It was the might of Asia that Dharmapala, like Vivekananda, awakened and re-established at home and abroad.'[57]

'THE ST PAUL OF BUDDHISM': DHARMAPĀLA AND PAUL CARUS

It has been mentioned that there was an astounding agreement concerning the nature and aim of religion among the religious leaders in the US, Europe, and Asia at the end of the nineteenth century. The Parliament of Religions was a celebration of grandiose ideas of a new religion that would unite mankind under the banner of rationality. The key issue was the conciliation of religion with the discoveries and the attitudes of science. Religion had to conform to the requirements of reason and to the law of evolution. Many expected that comparative studies of all religions would reveal a common core on which to base the religion of the future.

At the Parliament, Dharmapāla took care to present Buddhism as a rational system of thought. 'Buddhism is a scientific religion, inasmuch as it earnestly enjoins that nothing whatever be accepted

[56] *Maha Bodhi*, Sept. 1948, 292. [57] Ibid.

on faith.'[58] Among intellectuals everywhere religion and rationality were seen as opposing and mutually exclusive forces in human culture. Buddhism, however, conformed to the rational method of investigation and to the latest discoveries in physics and biology, Dharmapāla assured the audience in the US. The Buddha used the comparative method in building his system. He took what was best from all existing philosophies. This was part of his rational method, according to which everything should be judged on its merits and not accepted because it was taught. 'Do not believe in traditions', the Buddha said, according to Dharmapāla.[59]

The Western supporters of Buddhism were equally eager to present it as a system that conformed to the latest scientific discoveries. Paul Carus, to whom the text will shortly return, saw in Buddhism the scientific religion of the future. Sir Edwin Arnold said that both modern physics and the theory of evolution were contained in the teaching of the Buddha.[60] Other key issues for the religious leaders of the day were tolerance and the brotherhood of man. Universal love and sympathy with all mankind and with animal life had always been a central concern for Buddhists, said Dharmapāla. Aśoka was taken as the prime example of the high morality of Buddhism. During Aśoka's reign, the brotherhood of humanity was recognized for the first time in the history of civilization, and all religious sects enjoyed tolerance and support.

After the Parliament of Religion it was three years before Dharmapāla was able to return to the US. His ticket was paid for by one of the most zealous workers for the Buddhist cause in the US, the eccentric German writer Dr Paul Carus, who lived in La Salle, Illinois. Dharmapāla noted in his diary, 'Received from Dr Carus 75 pounds by draft to pay my passage to the US.'[61] This was not the only bill to be paid by Carus. As Vivekānanda had invaluable backing in the Maharaja of Khetri, Dharmapāla often relied on the goodwill of Dr Carus.

Carus was the most important contact for Buddhists from different parts of Asia who worked to establish their religious organizations in the US from the middle of the 1890s. He also assisted Japanese Buddhist leaders financially and helped them

[58] Barrows (ed.) (1893), ii. 878. [59] Ibid. 869.
[60] Quoted in *Return to Righteousness*, ed. Guruge 19–20.
[61] *Maha Bodhi*, Jan. 1955, 19.

organize their missionary activities and speeches in different parts of the US. D. T. Suzuki, the famous Japanese Zen master who was a pivotal figure in the introduction of Zen Buddhism to the US, was profoundly influenced by Carus. Suzuki was the pupil of the Zen master Shaku Soen, who met Dharmapāla at the Parliament of Religions. In 1895 Soen sent a letter to Carus saying that his young student had been so inspired by Carus's works on religion that he wished to study under his personal guidance in the US. Carus welcomed the young admirer and Suzuki would subsequently spend eleven years with his new teacher in La Salle, studying and working as a translator and proofreader for Carus's journal *The Open Court*.[62]

Many of the indologists of the day had profound sympathy with ideas they encountered in Buddhist literature. Most of them, however, kept their scholarly distance and integrity and had nothing but contempt for the mysterious ideas about Buddhism espoused, for instance, by the theosophists. Carus, on the other hand, saw Buddhism as a solution to the problems of the West.

Carus thought that the conflict between religion and science could only be solved by making religion scientific.[63] On the ninth day of the Parliament he gave a paper called 'Science a Religious Revelation'.[64] The aim of the paper was to explain the relationship between religious and scientific truth and to suggest the role of religion in the modern world. First of all, religion would not disappear as some said, Carus assured his listeners. Religion was the foundation of man's morality and was a necessary aspect of human existence. He was certain that religion was as indestructible as science, for as science was the method of searching for truth, religion was the enthusiasm and the will to live a life of truth. If scientific insight destroyed superstition and dogmatism, it was only for the good. This trimming off of the useless and ignorant beliefs

[62] Sharf (1995), 116–18.

[63] Of course, this is not a new idea. The Deists had already raised many of the same arguments in the late seventeenth century. The Irishman John Toland (1670–1722) wrote his first important and highly provocative work on the relationship between Christianity and reason in 1695; Matthew Tindal (1655–1733) published just as scandalous works on the same subjects from the first decade of the eighteenth century; and ideas of reason and natural religion had even greater impact in France, primarily through the philosophy of Rousseau. The relationship between religion, in other words Christianity, and reason had been a controversial subject for a long time.

[64] The paper can be found in Barrows (ed.) (1893), ii. 978–81.

that associated themselves with religion would lead to a higher state of religious evolution. Religion had no right to evade the challenge of science by saying that religious truths operated on a different level, or that there was a relationship of incommensurability between scientific and religious truths. Religious truths were not different from scientific ones, Carus insisted, and there could not be two truths that contradicted each other. These thoughts were typical for the time, and the views of Carus converged with the thought of some Indian leaders. For instance, they are reminiscent of Vivekānanda's ideas of religion and reason; perhaps this very speech was one of the sources for Vivekānanda's views on religion and science.

Similar rationalistic, non-ritualistic types of Buddhism enjoyed success among intellectuals in the US again during the second half of the twentieth century. In surveys of zen milieus, for instance, many people emphasized what one could call the non-religious aspects of Buddhism and denounced ritual, blind faith, and supernaturalism.[65] This was the kind of Buddhism that Carus professed to both Suzuki and Dharmapāla. However, it was not to the taste of more serious scholars. Max Müller, for instance, was always annoyed with mumbo-jumbo scholarship on Indian spirituality, and he did not like Carus's ideas any more than he liked Blavatsky's. Carus was a schemer and a wonder-worker, he told Dharmapāla on one occasion.[66] But Dharmapāla knew that money, organizational skills, and popular influence were of far greater importance to his cause than sound scholarship. Moreover, Carus became a friend.

When Dharmapāla returned to Chicago on 20 September 1896, he was met by Carus at the train station. There was a perfect sympathy between them, Dharmapāla noted in his diary. On this second visit to the US Dharmapāla spent much time with Carus, who helped him to work out a scheme for establishing the Maha Bodhi Society on the Continent.[67] Throughout his stay Dharmapāla appreciated more and more the assistance of Carus, and he regarded him as the most valuable helper in his missionary work in the US. On 19 January 1897 Dharmapāla wrote in his diary, 'Dr Carus is an indefatigable worker. He is deeply interested in the Good Law.

[65] See for instance Layman (1976), 261.
[66] *Maha Bodhi*, Jan. 1955, 51. [67] Ibid. 54.

He will be to Buddhism in the US what St Paul was to Christianity.'[68] If Carus would be the St Paul of Buddhism, it should not be difficult to guess who would be Jesus.

NEGOTIATING INDIANNESS

On 28 September 1898, in Sri Lanka, Dharmapāla wrote in his diary: 'The unification of the Sinhalese race is necessary. It is difficult, but Truth is on our side. We must be of one mind if we are to attain Nirvana.'[69] At this time the travelling back and forth between Sri Lanka and India was making him take a distanced look at his people and at his own work. He reflected on his first visits to Adyar and all the things that had happened since then. The relationship with his earlier masters in the Theosophical Society had changed dramatically. He was no longer the young man who had to beg for his father's permission to join Blavatsky on his first trip. He was no longer a blind admirer of theosophy and its leaders. His fervour had not diminished, however, nor had the physical and mental agonies or his martyr-like zeal. He had achieved something over the past eight years—that was clear to him—but still he saw how the peasants of Sri Lanka destroyed their lives by drink and how their children were indoctrinated with Christian values and alienated from their traditional religion.

The lack of an ethical code for the laity made a Sinhalese national identity unlikely before Dharmapāla. Traditionally, the ethics of Buddhism have found in the *Vinaya*, the rules of conduct for monks and, in Mahāyāna countries, for nuns. Laymen have not been the concern of canonical Buddhism except for some general injunctions like those given in the *Sigālovādasuttanta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, where the Buddha explains the duties of householders to the young man Sigāla. Nevertheless, Buddhism did give a system of ethics to the world as well as to the monks, although this system was not codified for lay people. Buddhism in ancient Sinhalese society assured that harmony with the cosmos on which social life depends, as B. L. Smith puts it.[70] This, of course, is the

[68] *Maha Bodhi*, Jan. 1956, 26. [69] Ibid. 1962.
[70] Smith (1978), 121–2.

role of any organized religion; indeed, it is one of its defining features.[71] In Peter Berger's terms, Sinhalese Buddhism provided a plausibility structure; a definition of reality that the community used to give meaning to worldly life. But there was never any written and generally accepted code of ethics that could organize the laity into one socio-political entity, and therefore the nineteenth century brought completely new challenges to Sinhalese society. As S. Amunugama says, 'This lack of concern with lay ethics is perfectly congruent with the salvation-goals and methods of the Buddha. But in the political context of Dharmapala's time, such a unifying code was of paramount importance. Dharmapala therefore compiled and published a lay code.'[72]

In Buddhist literature of the twentieth century the role of the laity is emphasized in a way that seems perfectly natural to any member of modern society. Buddhism has been given a new function as it comes to serve as the basis for national unity. A nation must have a measure of common values and civic ideology, and in order to induce a feeling of national identity among the Sinhalese people, Dharmapāla constructed a common code of ethics. The function of the code was clear. It was supposed to break the vertical boundaries of the agrarian society and serve as a foundation for national identity. Amunugama explains, 'It was a common platform cutting across caste and kin lines and eliminating village cultural practices which had a specific regional or caste focus.'[73]

But if Dharmapāla was so concerned about the Sinhalese nation, why did he spend most of his adult life in India? The answer to this question brings us closer to an understanding of the most interesting aspects of his personality and work. In one respect, Dharmapāla's nationalism was a concern for the internal organization and segmentation of Sinhalese society. It was a struggle to break internal boundaries, distribute the great heritage, and foster unity. In this sense, it was a process that many parts of the world have gone through with the spread of the ideologies and technologies of the French and industrial revolutions to every corner of the globe. But with the modernizing and nationalizing trends gaining momentum, processes of a different nature started to set in. Dharmapāla's work in India was part of a negotiation of

[71] Yinger (1971), 260. [72] Amunugama (1985), 721.
[73] Amunugama (1985), 722.

what it meant to be Indian. His greatest concern was not the internal affairs of the Sinhalese nation, but the external relationship between the different Indian religious nations that were emerging and, most importantly, the relationship of the small, peripheral Sinhalese Buddhist nation to the great Hindu nation of India.

The concept of centre and periphery can provide a useful framework for an understanding of Dharmapāla's relationship to India.[74] On the one hand, the metropolis London was naturally the centre of the system of government and the values and principles of authority that underpinned British rule in Asia. London was the symbolic centre of the empire, and in relation to Britain, Sri Lanka was a periphery. On the other hand, with the growth of the self-assertive Hindu nation and the idea of India as the world's guru, there appeared peripheries on another level. In Dharmapāla's mind, Buddhist Sri Lanka was a periphery in relation to Hindu India, and to Bengal in particular. The Buddhists had a special historical relationship to Eastern India because this was where the Buddha reached enlightenment and founded his religion. It is in this perspective that Dharmapāla's obsession with India can be understood. Dharmapāla's life-project was the remapping of the religious geography of India. The Buddhists had a rightful place in that geography—both the symbolic and the physical—which had been denied them in earlier phases of the subcontinent's history, especially by the Muslims. In Dharmapāla's mind the identity of the Buddhist Sinhalese nation had to be defined in relationship to the symbolic centre of their religion, which lay in the heart of India, at Bodh Gayā.

Dharmapāla's attempt to offer a new Buddhist identity consisted in negotiating symbolic territory in the religious geography of India. As this symbolic geography translated into real world geography as a piece of land owned by a Hindu *Mahant*, it entailed real world negotiations in the law courts of Calcutta as well as untiring polemic in the channels of public discourse, primarily the *Indian Mirror*. Dharmapāla's long struggle to gain control over Bodh Gayā was a struggle to define Buddhist identity for himself and for the Sinhalese nation in relation to their symbolic centre. Moreover, Bodh Gayā was given a prominent symbolic role in that it was thought of as a centre for Buddhists from other parts of the

[74] The basic ideas come from Shils (1975).

world. It is, of course, quite natural that the place where Prince Siddhārtha became Buddha should be important to Buddhists, and the practice of pilgrimage has full canonical support in the important *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, in which the Buddha on his deathbed gives the venerable Ānanda instructions on four future sites of pilgrimage, among which is the place where the Buddha attained supreme and perfect insight.[75] The same period brought similar challenges to Jaina leaders and at least one of them, Vijaya Dharma Sūri, tried to establish a Jaina centre at Pāvā, where Mahāvīra achieved his enlightenment.

[75] *Dīgha Nikāya*, ed. Rhys Davids and Carpenter 2. 140. The other three pilgrimage places are the place where the Buddha was born, the place where the kingdom of righteousness was set on foot by the Buddha, and the place where he passed away. These spots should be visited with feelings of reverence by believers and those who die on a pilgrimage go to heaven.

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Part III

JAINS

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5

Defining Jainism

The consciousness of a unified and historically determined Jain community emerged in the nineteenth century. Yet the history of Jainism during this time has hardly begun to be written.[1] There is a paucity of material on Jainism that puts limitations on the study of the period. Given the current state of research, an attempt to contribute to the field may seem ambitious. Important material may well appear from Jain libraries in the future. Moreover, in research into modern Jainism there has been a marked movement to pay close attention to local detail and differences, and it is clear that a study of Jains in the nineteenth century must take a more generalized approach from that considered normal among scholars of Jainism, especially those who emphasize fieldwork. On the other hand, a study of Jainism in this period that addresses the larger, supra-local issues is needed to fill out our picture of the trends in Indian religious history of this crucial time of transition. It certainly offers valuable information for a broad understanding of the religious transformations that took place.

In a sense, the chapter is an attempt to contribute to the discussion that was opened by the articles in the book *The Assembly of Listeners*, published in 1991.[2] These articles address issues of how Jains can be said to form a community and of the relationship between local face-to-face communities of different parts of the Indian subcontinent as well as among diasporas, on the one hand, and the larger imagined community of all Jains, on the other.

A COMMUNITY OF JAINS

Jainism originated as a religious movement for individuals who wished to renounce society and strive towards release from the cycle of rebirth. As a clearly defined entity, Jainism existed

[1] Dundas (1992), 4. [2] Carrithers and Humphrey (eds.) (1991).

primarily in the sense that there was a monastic tradition with monks and nuns who followed certain rules and practices and took a corpus of texts—handed down orally at first—as the basis for their religion. Jain identity was a matter of membership in the community of religious renouncers who were followers of Mahāvīra.

The Indian tradition of renouncers, to which Jainism belongs, separated religious identity from social identity. In the communities of renouncers identity was not a matter of one's natural place in the world of *dharma* and the duties and privileges that the position entailed. Religious identity became a matter of choice and a person's identification with the rules and doctrines of the community of renouncers. Membership of the community was not ascribed by birth but achieved by initiation, and it could in principle be achieved by anyone, irrespective of social standing.

However, the Jains, like the Buddhists, were materially dependent on people outside the community. They had to establish a relationship with the society that supported them and there developed a Jain laity. Jainism became a religion, so to say, having originated as an exclusive community of salvation-seekers. Jain identity came to consist of both a worldly (*laukika*) and an otherworldly (*pāralaukika*) aspect. The rituals and practices defining worldly identity often had their origins in the wider world of Hinduism in which Jains lived. This does not mean that Jains were indistinguishable from other Indians in their daily religious life. A number of practices, like the *pūjā* rituals, were distinctively Jain.

P. Dundas has warned us that the labels of the modern scholar—'Hinduism' and 'Jainism'—may not be very good depictions of the complex nature of religious identity.[3] J. Laidlaw has also warned against the assumption that Jains have been a clearly identified social group throughout history.[4] An important difficulty arises from the fact that words for the concept of community, or an Indian equivalent (*samāj, sangh*), are used with varying degrees of normativity and descriptivity. A Jain activist of our period would say that the Jains do form a community. A social scientist would perhaps take this to mean that the Jains do not at present form a community, but rather that they should do so according to Jain ideology. Such problems are common to literature on nationalism.

[3] Dundas (1992), 5. [4] Laidlaw (1995), 84.

In Jain ideology, the community consists of four groups: male and female ascetics (*sādhus* and *sādhvīs*) and male and female lay people or listeners (*śrāvakas* and *śrāvikās*). These four constitute the Jain Saṃgha. One source of common identity are the religious vows (*vrata*). Vows for the ascetics and the laity are similar, but ascetics must observe them more scrupulously. Whereas the monks and nuns take the five great vows (*mahāvrata*), the lay people take the five lesser vows (*aṇuvrata*). Thus, there is a difference only of degree between the religious specialist and the lay person in this respect. However, although the ties between the ascetics and the laity seem to have been close, Jainism has been divided into a large number of different schools and sects, especially since the eleventh century. The most important division is that between Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras. Before research on Jainism in the West gained a certain momentum towards the end of the nineteenth century, the textual basis of the two great schools was believed to be completely different. However, the scriptures of the Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras are in fact partly overlapping, as G. Bühler would conclude after visits to several Jain libraries in western India in the winter of 1875–6.[5]

The sense of Jains as a unified community separate from the Hindus and Muslims around them, both in a diachronic and a synchronic perspective, first emerged in the nineteenth century among Jain leaders who were in contact with the British and were influenced by their classification of Indian society into clear and distinct groups based on criteria such as religion, caste, and race. But did these ideas spread rapidly among most Jains? Several factors can be assumed to have made communication within the Jain population easier than within, say, the Hindu population. First, the Jains were far fewer in number. Secondly, a higher level of education in the Jain population may have been of significance. In the total population that was covered by the Census of Bombay and its feudatories of 1891—which included the parts of India with the largest Jain population—the male Jains were considerably better educated than the rest.[6]

[5] Bühler (1878), 28–9. For an overview of the textual basis of Jainism see Dundas (1992), 53–73.

[6] The number of registered Jains was 555,209. Of these 292,633 were males and 262,576 females. Of the male population 126,121 were registered as literate and 28,786 as learning; 137,726 men—less than half the male population—were

At this time we see the establishment of organizations for the propagation of Jainism in India. Books and journals were established, libraries were created, old texts were edited and published, students of Jainism were encouraged and supported, temples were renovated, animal hospitals, missionary societies, and schools for Jain preachers were established.[7] Still, these facts reflect the concerns of Jain leaders and it seems difficult to determine the extent to which the idea of a Jain community spread among Jains in different parts of India.

One of the central themes of this book is the way in which leaders of the nineteenth century struggled to break down barriers dividing the elites from the masses, they were extremely concerned about the relationship between the religious specialists and their lay supporters. A question that emerges in a discussion of Jainism, therefore, concerns how Jain leaders saw the role of the monks, the nuns and the laity in the Jain community and the relationship between them. In order to understand the special nature of the Jain case, a brief look is needed at how this relationship has been defined from medieval times onwards. In Indian history, 'medieval' usually refers to the millennium separating the decline of the Gupta empire around 500 AD from the rise of the Mughal empire in the beginning of the sixteenth century, but in the context of Jain sociology, the term is used primarily to speak about the important period roughly between 900 and 1200 AD.

THE LAWS OF THE LISTENERS

During the first centuries after Mahāvīra, Jain monks and nuns took little interest in the affairs of lay people, if we are to judge from the available material. In fact, originally Jainism made no doctrinal room for a good and pious householder because the possibility of achieving a good rebirth from meritorious action does

registered as illiterate. The percentage of illiterate women was considerably higher. If we compare this with the population at large we get the following picture. Of the total number of people in the census 13,872,613 were men. In the male population 12,124,584 were registered as illiterate, 308,669 were literate, while 439,360 were described as learning. The percentage of literate women was slightly lower. All data are taken from *Census of India, 1891*, 96 ff.

[7] For a summary of this activity see Glasenapp (1925), 75 ff.

not seem to have been part of early Jain thought.[8] Jains were monks and nuns and that was that. The regulation of worldly life with its laws, customs, and life-cycle rituals was left to the practice of the land (*deśācāra*) in which the lay person happened to live. However, from medieval times Jainism incorporated a large number of customs and rituals that had never been part of the salvation technique of early Jainism. Jain authors took more and more interest in the affairs of the lay person, and a whole literature on the subject, the laws or customs of the listeners, was compiled over the centuries. It is tempting to see this process as an attempt to integrate lay people more fully in the religion, or, indeed, to make a full-fledged religion out of a soteriology. The gradual integration of the lay people into Jainism, or rather the emergence of a proper Jain laity, presupposed certain doctrinal developments, the most important of which was the idea that a householder, or indeed a monk or a nun, could make merit (*puṇya*) from good and pious behaviour and especially the practice of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), and that merit could result in a good rebirth and in the long run lead towards liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Jain soteriology became less uncompromisingly black and white. There was a path in between fierce asceticism and a normal person's life, death, and subsequent rebirth in hell or as an animal. Jainism came to share a pan-Indian idea of merit-making, one function of which seems to have been to ensure lay people the possibility of making merit under almost any circumstances.[9]

An early example of the incorporation of new material pertaining to the worldly affairs of the layperson is found in a text called the *Ādipurāṇa* by the Digambara author Jinasena. Jinasena worked under the patronage of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, who enjoyed great power in South India during the early Middle Ages. Certain chapters of Jinasena's work—which was finished in 897 AD—are mainly devoted to an exposition of the fifty-three rituals (*kriyās*) of the layperson and of the monk. The significance of Jinasena's work is summed up by R. Williams: 'For the first time in Jain history the *rites de passage* are incorporated in the religious framework instead of being thrust aside as proper only for the *deśācāra*.'[10] The rituals described by Jinasena start with the

8 Johnson (1995), 23 ff.
9 Brekke (1998*a*), 1–34.
10 Williams (1983), 275.

copulation to beget a son, continue with rituals for different stages of pregnancy, then with those for birth and childhood, tonsure, investiture with the sacred thread, and so on. Finally the life as a householder ends with the acceptance of the monk's vows (*dīkṣā*). It is a typical trait of Jain lay ethics that the life of the householder is seen as a stage preliminary to monkhood. On the way to monkhood there are several stages of increasing strictness with regard to religious vows and practices. The obvious model for this was the Brahmin life-cycle culminating in the renunciation of the world.

The Jains were thoroughly influenced by Brahminical social ideology. Cāmuṇḍarāya, a medieval author of a work on the affairs of the lay people (*śrāvakācāra*) called Cāritrasāra, divided Jain society into the four stages of life (*āśramas*) described by the Hindu law books. The greatest of the Jain authors, Hemacandra, set up the classical three goals of Hinduism, namely socio-religious duty (*dharma*), worldly success (*artha*), and pleasure or enjoyment (*kāma*) as the ideal for the Jain layman.[11] An earlier Jain text, the Mahāpurāṇa, anchors the Hindu social system of *varṇas* in Jain history by ascribing its origin to the Jain hero Bharata. Bharata saw that the lay people were different and issued a test to classify them. By testing their observance of non-violence, which is an extremely important part of Jain ideology, he could put the lay people in four broad categories directly borrowed from the Brahminical social ideology: *Brāhmaṇa* (priest), *Kṣatriya* (warrior), *Vaiśya* (merchant), and *Śūdra* (servant or slave).[12]

Moreover, the Jains have integrated the Hindu institution of caste. In his work the *Upāsakādhyayana*, the tenth-century Digambara writer Somadeva justifies caste by saying that it is part of the customs and institutions of worldly life (*laukika* dharma). Real Jain identity is linked to an other-worldly doctrine (*pāralaukika* dharma). The practice of the lower *dharma*, of which the rules of caste are a part, is simply a necessity of profane daily life and does not interfere with the higher teachings of Jainism and the Jain identity, he says. M. Lath believes that Somadeva's splitting up of Jain life into two separate spheres has had significant consequences for Jain identity: 'The fact seems to have been, as it

[11] Cort (1991*a*), 391–420. esp. 393. [12] Lath (1991), 25 ff.

is in Rajasthan today, that the Jains had a dual identity: a *jāti* identity and a Jain identity.'[13]

However, the double identity does not necessarily entail a problem, on either the personal or the communal level. First, one should not underestimate people's ability to live happily with incongruities between orthodox teachings and daily life. The Buddhists of Sri Lanka have also integrated the system of caste without signs of collective cognitive dissonance. Secondly, Jains have never denied the social reality of *jāti* and *varṇa*, and for most lay Jains in a wider Hindu society their double identity may in fact have been an advantage. O. Qvarnström has pointed out that medieval Jainism was a highly pragmatic tradition adopting terminology, ideas, and organizing principles from outside in a manner that would not jeopardize what was seen as the fundamental principles of the religion.[14] This was a conscious strategy for survival and growth in a sometimes hostile Brahminical environment and in a milieu of missionary devotional sects. Moreover, the double identity of Jains can be a form of social dominance in modern-day India, as J. Laidlaw has pointed out.[15] Although Jains take part in Hindu social life and identify with non-Jain society in many respects, non-Jains do not share in Jain identity. Perhaps one could say that the borders between Jains and the outside society are of a semi-permeable nature: they let Jains cross over when they like, at the same time keeping non-Jains out. The outside world is visible and available to Jains, whereas the world of Jainism is opaque and inaccessible to the outsider.

The incorporation of the affairs of the world into Jainism during the Middle Ages and their subsequent modification entailed a considerable degree of Hinduization. Indeed, this is almost a truism, since the *deśācāra*, the customs and rituals of the land, were Hindu more or less by definition. When the Jains wanted Jain ceremonies pertaining to conception, birth, adolescence, or marriage, there were only Brahminical rituals available as models. The prime example of such worldly practices accommodated over time is the *pūjā* ritual: worship with offerings (*dravyapūjā*) and by mental concentration and hymns of praise (*bhāvapūjā*) directed at a Jina image or some other entity of religious significance. *Pūjā* is exclusively a lay

[13] Ibid. 29. [14] Qvarnström (1998), 33–55. [15] Laidlaw (1995), 95.

activity modelled on the Hindu ritual and is not described in any canonical Jain literature.[16]

An important aspect of the social change that the Digambara Jain community went through in the Middle Ages was the establishment of a new religious and social institution, the *Bhaṭṭārakas*. A *Bhaṭṭāraka* is an individual who serves as an intermediate authority between the ascetics and the laity. The general duty of the *Bhaṭṭāraka* is defined as protection of religion (*dharmarakṣā*), which consists in repulsing attacks from other religions and educating and preaching to the laity. The *Bhaṭṭāraka* is also supposed to perform social duties pertaining to his caste, such as giving advice, mediating in quarrels, and otherwise regulating social affairs. The *Bhaṭṭāraka* is followed in his position by an individual chosen from among his disciples. However, the nominated successor must be installed by the people of the caste and, in some places, by the government. Once the *Bhaṭṭāraka* is installed, he cannot be removed.[17]

Although *Bhaṭṭārakas*, in theory, fulfil an important function in Digambara society, their position is not prominent in many castes in modern India. The *Bhaṭṭārakas* are often wealthy and caste members tend to view them as lazy and a burden to society. Many would like to see the institution abolished altogether. Others wish to keep the *Bhaṭṭāraka*, but acknowledge that the institution needs to be reformed. The criteria for selection should be made more severe to ensure that only competent individuals become *Bhaṭṭārakas*, they feel, and the community should have power to remove an incompetent person from office.[18]

The *Bhaṭṭāraka* was not the only religious office intended to occupy a position between that of monks and lay people. Religious figures known as *munis*, *yatis*, and *saṃvarīs* to some degree filled the same functions. As P. Dundas writes: 'Further examination shows that, at least from the medieval period, there have always been interstitial figures within Jainism who have straddled the lay-monastic gap.'[19]

This social transformation consisted of two factors. First, the monks started taking an interest in the life of the laity and there was a concern to codify worldly ethics and link it to the world of

[16] Williams (1983), 216 ff. [17] Sangave (1959), 332. [18] Ibid. 334 ff.
[19] Dundas (forthcoming), 187.

the monk, as reflected in the literature on the affairs of the laity. Secondly, there emerged a number of interstitial positions which served as channels between the high ideals of total renunciation and life in the world and which, perhaps, enhanced cohesion in the Jain community as a whole.

A similar social transformation did not take place in Theravāda Buddhism, at least not to the same degree. Perhaps the most important reason for this was the fact that Buddhism in Sri Lanka and South-East Asia was the religion of the state. The people were ruled by pious Buddhist kings with close ties to the Saṃgha. This theoretically ensured a rule of righteousness. The institution of Buddhist kingship made any worldly involvement by the monks themselves unnecessary. Jainism never enjoyed a similar fusion of state and religion. This does not mean that the Jains always lacked royal support. According to the Jain tradition, Candragupta Maurya, grandfather of Aśoka, embraced Jainism late in life, abdicated in favour of his son Siṃhasena, and travelled with the Jain saint Bhadrabāhu to Śravaṇa-Belgolā in Mysore, where he carried out what is known as the *sallekhanā vrata*, the vow of ritual suicide by fasting.[20] In southern India, especially Karṇātaka, several kings had been Jains or had close affiliations to Jainism. A Jain monk is said to have been involved in the founding of the Gaṇga dynasty of the third century CE, and early Gaṇga kings were supporters of Jainism. The ninth-century Rāṣṭrakuṭa king Amoghavarṣa was the patron of Jinasena, the famous author of the *Ādipurāṇa*. Jinasena's account of the institution of kingship shows that Jainism, like Buddhism and Christianity, was forced to deal with the question of worldly power as the religion spread and was taken up by rulers. But it also testifies to the fact that the Jain monks who came in contact with wielders of worldly power often seized the opportunity to preach ethics and endorse the ideal of the spiritual warrior. Amoghavarṣa is said to have retreated to a Jain monastery on several occasions during his reign.[21] A Digambara monk is also supposed to have been instrumental in the founding of the Hoysala dynasty of the twelfth century. The early Hoysalas,

[20] Thapar (1961), 17. Lamotte remarked that Candragupta undoubtedly was a pious observer of Brahmanical laws and customs most of his life, and this is especially true if the tradition of his fiercely orthodox Brahmin mentor, sometimes identified with Kauṭilya, the author of the *Arthaśāstra*, has a basis in reality. Lamotte (1976), 242. On *sallekhanā*, see Williams (1983), 166 ff.

[21] Sastri, (1966), 438.

who had their power base in the mountains of southern Karṇātaka and who would have their heyday as the Coḷa kingdom faded in the thirteenth century, were Jains, and their capital was an important religious centre before the king Viṣṇuvardhana converted to Vaiṣṇavism and drove the Jains out.[22] The greatest success that Jainism had in northern India in terms of royal support was its relationship to Kumārapāla. Hemacandra was adviser to the Hindu king, who was a devotee of Śiva, and in writing the *Yogaśāstra* he took care not to present Jainism in a way that would alienate his powerful patron.[23]

The care not to offend powerful adherents of other faiths has been a necessary and, perhaps, typical aspect of Jainism's strategy for survival in a larger Hindu or Muslim society. Under Islamic rule the fortunes of other religious communities in India oscillated. In Muslim xenology Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains—seen as polytheists or atheists—all belonged to the most despised category of non-Muslims, and they were a legitimate target of persecution according to classical Islamic jurisprudence.[24] Especially during the early period of Muslim rule the Jains were harrassed, and their temples and religious images were destroyed. Later, under the Mughals, the Muslim view of Indian religions seems to have become less hostile. Some Jain monks even enjoyed great respect for their learning at the Muslim courts.[25] According to V. A. Smith monks for many years gave the Great Mughal Akbar instructions that largely influenced his actions, and his sympathies towards their teachings earned him a reputation for being converted to Jainism.[26] P. Dundas, on the other hand, doubts that the Jains had real influence on any of the Mughals.[27] In either case, the Jains seem to have been allowed a certain degree of religious freedom under the later phases of Muslim rule in India.

In spite of this history of royal patronage, it is fair to say that Jainism never had the success in India that Buddhism had in Sri Lanka. From the Middle Ages it was clear to the Jains that they would have to maintain their religious identity and internal cohesion while existing alongside, or even outside, a larger

[22] Stein (1989), 16. Dundas (1992), 101–3.
[23] Qvarnström (1989), 33–55.
[24] See Khadduri (1955), 72 ff. Kelsay (1990), 123–39.
[25] See Smith (1917), 265–76. Saletore (1937), 77–87.
[26] Smith (1917), 267. [27] Dundas (1992), 126.

society ruled by Hindus or Muslims. The differences in the political fortunes of Jainism and Theravāda Buddhism is reflected in fundamental differences in the sociology of the two religions. H. Jacobi sums up this difference thus:

> It is evident that the lay parts of the community were not regarded as outsiders, or only as friends and patrons of the Order, as seems to have been the case in early Buddhism; their position was, from the beginning, well defined by religious duties and privileges; the bond which united them to the Order of monks was an effective one.[28]

The most important consequence of this close union between monks and nuns and laity was that it enabled Jainism to resist dangers from without as well as internal changes, Jacobi continues. Lacking the political superstructure that Theravāda Buddhism enjoyed, the Jains developed a stronger sense of community.

The social organization of the Jains gives an unexpected insight into the transformations in cultural identity and the growth of nationalism in nineteenth century South Asia. The cultural identity of members of a religious community like the Buddhists of Sri Lanka was more vulnerable to fragmentation than that of the Jains because it was founded on a political system that ceased to exist between the last part of the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries. With the internal cohesion existing between monks and lay people in Jainism from medieval times and with Jainism's long history of adjustment to a larger society, one would expect the impact of colonialism to be less severe for the Jain communities than for many other religious communities of South Asia. However, this assumption cannot be justified in the light of the information available on Jainism in the nineteenth century. There was a reaction of religious reform among Jains comparable to that which took place among Hindus and Sri Lankan Buddhists.

THE ROLE OF THE CENSUS

After the termination of the East India Company in 1858, the government of India became the responsibility of the Crown. The Bombay Presidency—which comprised Sindh, Gujarat, and Rajputana, as well as Maharashtra, and therefore is particularly

[28] Jacobi (1914), 470.

interesting in a discussion of Jains—was one in which the British took their administrative tasks very seriously. For instance, detailed maps were made and land and soil assessed for a precise regulation of revenue. Another aspect of the administrative zeal of the new era was the extensive census-taking, and over the years the population of British India was measured by a number of different criteria, such as religion. This was done by printing questionnaires and instructing enumerators—mostly local teachers, shopkeepers, or educated villagers—on how to fill them out. The date and time of the census were set and on the appointed day the enumerators would go through their villages and visit every house. In order to avoid ambiguities, definitions were made to guide those who gathered the information in the field. For instance, what makes a person a Hindu? 'All believers in the Vedas must be entered as Hindoo, and so, too must those wild tribes—as Bheels—whose original religions are lost, and who now, to all intents and purposes, are Hindoo by Religion though not by Race.'[29]

Similar clear-cut definitions were formulated with regard to class or caste, race or nationality, and other important variables. It was believed that the exact definitions in the entries, combined with the faithful work of the enumerators and the methodical scrutiny to which the collected material was subject at later stages, would ensure the highest degree of precision in the statistical data that was produced. In the report of the census of the Central Provinces of 1866, we are told that items of information 'were not variable, and could therefore be exactly ascertained and entered in the returns'.[30] The result was impeccable, according to the reporters: 'The Deputy Commissioners, and all officials and non-officials who were concerned in the affair are unanimously of opinion that the census was successfully effected, and that the statistics now offered are relieable, and indeed almost quite correct.'[31]

However, not all British officials were equally convinced of the accuracy of the censuses. The difficulties of putting people in rigorous categories according to race or religion was expressed in a report after the census of 1871–2. 'The title of Hindoo, in the category of nationality and caste, includes many persons of Hindoo origin, who are no longer Hindoos by religion, such as Native

[29] *Census of the Bombay Presidency... 1872*, 97.
[30] *Report on the Census of the Central Provinces... 1866*, 4.
[31] Ibid. p. 5

Christians, or who have branched off from its stricter use, such as Buddhists and Jains, or whose actual religion is unknown, such as the aboriginal tribes.'[32]

In the statistics of religious affiliation produced by the British censuses 1881–1901, the proportion of Jains to the total population of India diminished. In the period 1891–1901 there was a 5.8 per cent decrease in the Jain population. In the same period the Muslim population increased by 8.9 per cent and the Christian population by 27.9 per cent.[33] Several reasons can be sought for this development. Many Jains actually converted to Hinduism. In addition, as discussed above, the religious identity of Jain lay people consisted in an other-worldly (*pāralaukika*) and a worldly (*laukika*) aspect; when asked by the census-takers to state their religious affiliation, many Jains may have chosen to resort to their worldly identity as Hindus.

The British census-takers were often aware of this problem. According to the 1901 census, the decline in the Jain population can be ascribed to 'a growing tendency to describe themselves as Hindus'.[34] The real number of Jains is supposed to be greater than that reflected in the statistics. 'The total numerical strength of the Jains is 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ million, according to the census, but in many parts they are prone to describe themselves as Hindus and their real number is probably greater.'[35]

Whatever the reasons for the decline in the Jain population may be, here we have a case in which an attempt to describe a situation in an objective manner contributed to altering that situation. For it seems that the censuses of the British government were instrumental in changing the self-perception of Jains during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The census-makers wanted an unambiguous classification. In order to get this, they needed their Indian subjects to have unambiguous identities. But as we have seen, many Jains had highly ambiguous identities in terms of religion. B. Anderson puts it thus: 'The fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one—and only one—extremely clear place.'[36] If people did not have a clear-cut identity with regard to religion, they were given one.

[32] *Memorandum on the Census of British India of 1871–72*, 20.
[33] General Distribution of Population by Religion, in *Census of India, 1901*, 395.
[34] Ibid. 382. [35] Ibid. 381. [36] Anderson (1991), 166.

It is a commonplace among ethnohistorians, i.e. practitioners of the anthropology of colonial knowledge developed by Bernard S. Cohn, that surveys and censuses tell us more about the mind of the colonizers than about their subjects.[37] The important concern for this study is not whether the British believed in the fiction, but how the Jains themselves reacted to it. In the official censuses and reports the Jains appeared as a category distinct from their Hindu neighbours, and more importantly, as a category that faced extinction. As B. S. Cohn has pointed out, it would be unreasonable to assume that most Indian villagers took any notice of the questions they were asked about their different affiliations (caste, race, religion etc.) or even that the questionnaires were always distributed the way they were supposed to be.[38]

Nevertheless, the idea of religious identity conveyed in the census did have an important effect on the self-perception of the Jains. To carry through the census-projects in the late nineteenth century at least half-a-million Indians, and probably many more, were involved in the work, Cohn says.[39] These enumerators, who were better educated and had closer contacts with the British, were far more likely to attribute significance to the categories and numbers they were dealing with. And it was in their perception that the different religious communities, like the Jains, were likely to undergo a process of objectification, to use Cohn's terminology.

This situation has parallels in the changing perception of religion and *dharma* described in the chapter about the Hindus of Bengal. In both cases foreign education, affiliation with the colonial administration, and, in some cases, knowledge of the English language, created a hermeneutic situation in which one's own community and religion acquired a new mode of being. They became objects that could be described in experience-distant concepts and compared with other communities and religions in India and in the world.

JAINISM: AN INDEPENDENT SYSTEM?

It has already been discussed how the elites of India in the nineteenth century were deeply influenced by the European ideas of

[37] Cohn (1996). [38] Cohn (1984), 43. [39] Ibid. 44.

history. Through the impact of the English language religion had been singled out as a separate constituent of human society. The Jain leaders of the nineteenth century shared in this world view. To them the Jain Dharma was an object in the history and the geography of India like any other religious system of the region. The identity and self-esteem of Jains were closely linked to the history of Jainism and its historical status; the latter was again contingent upon its relationship to other religious systems and from this fact proceeded a few momentous historical questions: What was the historical relation between Jainism and the other two Indian religions? Was Jainism an offshoot of Buddhism? Was it a variant, perhaps a caste, of Hinduism? Or was it a completely independent system?

By the last part of the nineteenth and the earliest parts of the twentieth century, Western scholars had already been taking an interest in the history of Jainism for some time. Certain eminent monks readily assisted scholars in their research into Jain texts and many of these scholars showed much sympathy with Jainism. A central question for European scholars concerned the details of the origins of the religion. On this there was no consensus. One theory—supported by Wilson, Benfey, and Weber—said that Jainism was an offshoot of Buddhism. Some supporters of this hypothesis would place the origins of Jainism as late as the eight, ninth, or even the tenth century AD. Another theory—upheld by Colebrooke and Stevenson—stated the exact opposite: Buddhism was an offshoot of Jainism. The founder of Buddhism, Gautama, was identical with Gautamasvāmin, a pupil of Mahāvīra, Colebrooke said. For the Jains themselves these questions took on great significance. If Jainism was a sectarian offshoot of Buddhism and a latecomer among the religions, this meant that its place in India would be of secondary importance. Consequently, the Jain leaders sided with the scholars who gave Jainism a primary position. Jainism must be shown to be independent of Buddhism and preferably older than its historical rival.

W. Schubring dates the start of Western research on Jainism to 1807 with the appearance of three reports in *Asiatic Researches*.[40] Later that year H. T. Colebrooke published his first article on the Jains in the same journal. He had come across some Jain

[40] Schubring (1962), 1.

manuscripts in Benares that had triggered his interest in the religion.[41] Colebrooke's point of departure was the work of Major Mackenzie and Francis Buchanan, published a few months earlier. The views advanced by Colebrooke on the relationship between the religions of India are close to what has become generally accepted by later scholarship. He suggested the hypothesis—though careful to point out that conclusive evidence on the matter was still lacking—that of the main religious sects of India, the follower of the Veda 'who worshipped the sun, fire and the elements' was the oldest.[42] Buddhism and Jainism had both developed out of the fold of this Brahmin religion.

In 1858 A. Weber summed up the discussion of the relationship between Buddhism and Jainism in the introduction to his edition of a Jain text.[43] He concluded that the Jains were the younger of the two religions. In 1883 Weber again—in his usual erudite and massive style—advanced the view that Jainism was one of the oldest sects of Buddhism.[44] Jainism was, in other words, a secondary development, an offshoot of an older and more original creed.

The next year some important Jain texts were published in the series called Sacred Books of the East, edited by Max Müller. The texts were translated by Hermann Jacobi, who used almost the entire introduction to argue against the view that Jainism was an offshoot of Buddhism. According to Jacobi, Weber's arguments were 'fully refuted' by his own exposition of the relevant facts and he could safely conclude that Jainism had an origin independent of Buddhism and a development of its own.[45] But Jacobi went further and suggested that Jainism was not only independent of Buddhism, but much older.

It is evident that Jacobi's personal preferences and sympathies blended with his scholarship in his judgements on the relative age of the religions of India. For the student of nineteenth-century indology he stands out as the untiring defender of Jainism's antiquity. Jacobi believed that the Buddha and Mahāvīra were contemporaries. However, Mahāvīra was not the founder of Jainism, he said. Early Buddhist texts speak of the Jains as an established system and not as a movement in the first years of its

41 T. E. Colebrooke (1873), 259 ff.
42 Repr. in H. T. Colebrooke (1873), 176.
43 Intro. to Weber (1858). 44 Weber (1883), 240.
45 Intro. to *Gaina Sutras*, ed. Jacobi, pp. xviii, xxxv.

existence, he argued. The Jain tradition speaks of twenty-four ford-makers, the last being Mahāvīra. Most of these are separated by phenomenal and purely imaginary stretches of time. However, the penultimate ford-maker, Pārśva, may have been an historical person and was probably the founder of Jainism, according to Jacobi. One text says that a disciple of Pārśva met a disciple of Mahāvīra, which brought about a union of their respective groups. This indicates that Pārśva was a real person, Jacobi said. Pārśva's death was placed 250 years before that of Mahāvīra—a 'reasonable interval' according to Jacobi. However, he does not present any independent evidence—apart from the references to Pārśva in the Jain texts—to explain why this interval is reasonable.

It is a striking feature of the Jain publications of the period that they wish to engage in the debate over the historical status of Jainism. The new ideas of history were the perceptual foundation of this debate and the historicist view of religions and their communities was pronounced in the thinking of one of their leaders, Vijaya Dharma Sūri.

VIJAYA DHARMA SŪRI

Vijaya Dharma Sūri was an important figure in nineteenth-century Jainism.[46] His original name was Mūla Candra; he got the name Dharma Vijaya when he became a monk in 1887, whereas Vijaya Dharma Sūri was the appellation he was given in 1908, when the title of Śāstraviśārada Jainācārya was conferred on him by the Maharaja of Benares and a large number of Hindu pandits from different parts of India. Mūla Candra was born in Kathiawar, Gujarat, in 1868. Thus, he was a contemporary of Vivekānanda and Dharmapāla, and, as we shall see, he held many similar views regarding the status of religion. Through childhood and adolescence Mūla Candra took no interest either in religion or in learning

[46] Several scholars have mentioned Vijaya Dharma Sūri in short articles, letters, or obituaries. Examples are found in Vijaya Indra Sūri (ed.) (1924). Glasenapp attempts to put Vijaya Dharma in the larger perspective of modern Indian religious history in Glasenapp (1925), 74–5. Guérinot gives a short summary of the Yaśovijaya Pāṭhaśāla institute established by Vijaya Dharma and the editions of Jaina texts called *Yaśovijayajainagranthamālā*. Guérinot (1910), 581–6. Two biographies in English are Tessitori (1917); Sunavala (1934). The biographers often seem to have borrowed and copied from each other, and it is difficult to say what information is of real value.

and showed no special talents. His education was neglected by his family, and he spent his time hanging around in his father's shop. As a child of the streets—Konow likened him to Kipling's Kim—Mūla Candra picked up the habit of gambling. However, this vice would become the direct cause of the young man's religious motivation, his biographers tell us. The loss of a large sum of money triggered thoughts about the unsatisfactory nature of earthly possessions, and *vairāgya*, non-attachment, took root in him.

The transformations in self-perception during the last decades of the nineteenth century carried a sense of peril for many Jains in the sense that their numbers were decreasing. The Jain community reacted to the perceived threats and tried to find a way to turn the tide. According to C. Krause—the translator of Vijaya Dharma Sūri's sayings—there were two types of reaction.[47] A conservative faction condemned Western influence and demanded a return to ancient ways, a ban on Western education, a ban on lay access to sacred texts, and greater segregation as a countermeasure against evil influences and conversion to other faiths. In opposition to this were the reformers, who propagated modern education, popularization and distribution of Jain literature in India and the West, improvement of the position of women, and unification of different Jain sects. If the division described by Krause was real, it was strikingly similar to the two broad and fundamentally opposite reactions among Hindus: the conservatives' return to the Veda and Brahminical values versus reform of religion and unconditional espousal of Western science and organizational methods. Vijaya Dharma, although he had died eight years before Krause's account was published, would undoubtedly have been classified as a reformer in this somewhat simplistic analysis of contemporary Jain society.

Vijaya Dharma worked for the revitalization of Jainism. With this aim he founded a number of institutions and travelled throughout India. In 1904 he started a series of Sanskrit and Prakrit works called *Yaśovijaya Jain Granthamālā*, named after a great Jain logician, in order to rescue important Jain works from disappearance. In 1903 Vijaya Dharma founded a Jain college in Benares. His work in Benares—the high-seat of traditional Hinduism—initially met with stark opposition from local

[47] Krause (1930), 283 ff.

Brahmins. In his preaching in Benares Vijaya Dharma emphasized that Jainism was not an atheistic religion. On the contrary, the Jains teach obedience to God, he said. Moreover, Jainism does not teach anything that is alien or contrary to Hinduism. The fundamental similarity between Jainism and Hindusim was a natural part of a teaching according to which all religions were essentially the same. An important message of Vijaya Dharma's speeches was the unity of all religions of the world and the superficiality of their differences. Naturally, all religions have their own history and their peculiar formulation of doctrines, and these peculiarities are all invaluable contributions to humanity, he said. Islam has submission to God as its hallmark, Jainism has love, and Hinduism has *dharma*. However, underneath these differences of emphasis one finds a core of truth common to all religions.

As Sunavala has pointed out, both the monk and the householder were embodied in Vijaya Dharma.[48] He followed the traditional life of the ascetic, begging his food and wandering barefoot throughout the year, only staying in one place during the rainy season. However, he also worked for the welfare of the world, establishing institutions for the dissemination of Jain texts and the preservation of archaeological remains, and setting up schools and hospitals for animals. The role of the monk who saw himself as the servant of his people and of humanity in general is a familiar theme of this period.

Service was a central concern for Vijaya Dharma. He was a monk who worked for the welfare of the world and for the social and spiritual uplift of the Jains. 'True monks are those who, living on alms, wander about on earth for their own and others' benefit', he said.[49] This fits well into the general pattern of a contemporary movement of religious and national revitalization in which monks played the leading parts. This was the case both in Hindu Bengal and in Buddhist Sri Lanka. However, social work motivated by religion has a long history in Jainism. Perhaps the most important vow of the Jain layperson was the *dānavrata*, the vow of giving. The qualities of the thing given, of the giver, and of the recipient have been a cherished subject for Jain authors. The medieval Digambara writer Vasunandin says that one should give not only to

[48] Sunavala (1934), 161.
[49] *Sayings of Vijaya Dharma Suri*, trans. Krause, no. 77.

monks, but to the very young and the very old, the blind, the dumb, the deaf, strangers from another land, and the sick.[50] Āśādhara, a learned Digambara lay writer of medieval Rajputana, enjoins the giving of food, water, and medicines regardless of faith. In his discussion of the different *kṣetras*, or fields for the sowing of merit, Hemacandra also says that charity should be practised towards those who have fallen into evil circumstances.[51] The practice of giving to the needy regardless of religious and social affiliation is the gift of charity (*karuṇadāna*). The gift of charity is closely related to an active practice of the vow of non-violence (*ahiṃsāvrata*), another essential pillar of Jain ethics, and to the gift of security (*abhayadāna*), which is an important aspect of *ahiṃsā*.

In his foreword to Sonavala's biography, Sylvain Lévi writes that Jainism had been used for centuries to live in splendid isolation. Vijaya Dharma rent asunder that voluntary confinement, and took Jainism back into the general stream of human thought, Lévi says.[52] There is no doubt that Vijaya Dharma opened up Jainism in certain ways. He was an important contact for all Western scholars working on Jainism, both by providing access to texts and through assistance in interpreting points of doctrine. All of the early Jainologists of Europe—Jacobi, Schubring, von Glasenapp, Hoernle, and Guérinot, to mention only a few—acknowledged their debt to Vijaya Dharma. However, he also opened up Jainism to the rest of India and this is of particular importance in the study of the revival of Indian religion that took place in the nineteenth century. On the death of Vijaya Dharma, Konow noted in his obituary the connection between Vijaya Dharma's work and the general direction of Indian self-perception:

> It is of some interest to note that Vijaya Dharma in his keen interest for the revival of an ancient Indian religion, is not an isolated phenomenon in the India of to-day. On the contrary, his life and his work are symptoms of a tendency which can be said to be typical of modern India. . . . India is awakening to a consciousness of her own worth in the spiritual world as in the world of nations. 'Revival' is everywhere the catchword. And in this general tendency the personality of the deceased Jain Sūri well fits in.[53]

[50] Williams (1983), 157. [51] Ibid. 26, 158. [52] Sunavala (1934), p. x.
[53] Konow (1924), 10.

Just as Anagārika Dharmapāla worked for the revitalization of Buddhism and Vivekānanda for Hinduism, so Vijaya Dharma worked for the restoration of Jainism. However, it was a younger Jain who was destined to represent Jainism to a larger public in the West.

ĀTMĀRĀMJĪ, VIRCHAND R. GANDHI, AND THE MESSAGE OF INDIA

On 12 November 1892, the organizers of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago sent a letter to Mr Atmaramji of Bombay, India. The letter was signed by William Pipe on behalf of J. H. Barrows, the Chairman of the Committee on Religious Congresses. As the foremost representative of the Jain religion, Ātmārāmjī was asked to become a member of the Advisory Council of the Parliament and to represent Jainism at the conference to be held in 1893. Ātmārāmjī would have been an interesting figure to have at the Parliament if he had chosen to attend it.

Ātmārāmjī was an important religious figure in this period although he was different from Vijaya Dharma Sūri in many respects. He had initially belonged to a tradition called the Sthānakvāsīs. The Sthānakvāsīs were an important reformist group that continued the tradition originating in the antagonism towards the monks who stayed in temples and worshipped the image of the saint or Jina (*jinabimba*). In order to understand the importance of such questions in the life of the Jain monk, it is necessary to take a brief look at the tradition of reform that is the ideological and historical context of Ātmārāmjī's life. Several Jain texts from medieval times onward show that the Śvetāmbara Saṃgha was split on many occasions over issues about how monks should live. One such issue was the question of whether monks should live in monasteries and to what extent the temple-dwelling monks, the *Caityavāsins*, deserved the gifts of the laity.[54] The Kharatara Gaccha, a very old reformist movement of the Śvetāmbaras, tried to purge the community of monks of their corrupt practices. Not unlike the forest-dwelling Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka, the leaders of the Kharatara Gaccha saw life in the

[54] Dundas (1987–8), 182–94.

monasteries and in close association with the laity as corrupting and solitude in the forest as the ascetic ideal.[55]

Another important topic which became the cause of schism among the Śvetāmbaras in the late Middle Ages was the worship of images. It became a central issue in the Śvetāmbara community through the reformist work of Lonkā Shā, a Gujarati of the fifteenth century.[56] This period was a time of great reformists in northern India. It was the time of the dissenting and iconoclastic devotional religion of Kabīr and Dadu and the founder of Sikhism, Nānak. The religious fervour of the times also affected Jainism. According to Jain tradition Lonkā was a wealthy merchant who became engaged in the copying of religious texts around the middle of the century. Through a study of these works he realized that the contemporary practice of Jainism was far removed from the original teaching of the Tīrthaṅkaras. His most important objection was to the rituals and, in particular, the icon worship of his co-religionists. In addition, he rejected the authority of several of the texts. He won over a number of Jains to his teaching and started a sect with the aim of bringing Jainism back to its pristine state.[57]

From the end of the sixteenth century this sect, the Lonkā Gaccha, itself became the object of accusations of laxity, and in the beginning of the seventeenth century new reforms were initiated. Again, the reformers stressed that the serious ascetic must shun the life of the monasteries with its image-worship and its corrupting contacts with the world. Again the *Caityavāsin* was held up as the symbol of laxity. In short, Jainism had a very long tradition of reform before the modern period and the controversies often revolved around the questions of icon worship and the laxity of life in temples.

Ātmārāmjī started out as a member of a reformist sect but changed affiliation when, through scriptural studies, he came to the conclusion that Jainism in fact justified image-worship, contrary to the belief of his fellow monks. In other words, he took the step opposite to the founders of the reformist tradition, the Sthānakvāsīs, and became an image-worshipper, or a *Mūrtipūjak*. This was typical of Ātmārāmjī's personality. Taking a firm stand against

[55] See Dundas (1992), 120–2, and also Klatt (1882), 248.
[56] For the life of Lonkā I rely on the accounts given in Dundas (1992), 211–18 and Glasenapp (1925), 69–72.
[57] Dundas (1992), 213.

what he saw as heterodox innovations, he engaged wholeheartedly in some of the central controversies of his day. Ātmārāmjī's concern was to define Jainism. He knew what Jainism should be and he was not afraid to condemn the sects (*gacchas*) or the individual teachers who deviated from his ideal. He wrote a book condemning the Ḍhūṇḍhaka sect and defining orthodox Jainism in opposition to its mistakes.[58] Ḍhūṇḍhaka is simply another name for Sthānakvāsī; according to Schubring's explanation of the term, it denotes a futile seeker in the scriptures.[59] Thus, the name obviously refers to the whole project of iconoclastic re-reading of canonical texts beginning with Lonkā Shā. In other words, Ātmārāmjī wanted to reform the very reformist tradition. Ātmārāmjī also sought to define Jainism vis-à-vis the outside world of Hinduism. However, as opposed to certain other Jain leaders of the nineteenth century, he saw Hinduism as a system of thought and a tradition fundamentally different from Jainism and essentially misguided. He duly wrote a controversial treatise against Hinduism entitled *The Illumination of the Darkness of Ignorance*.[60]

Ātmārāmjī was clearly not interested in the ecumenical questions that occupied a number of Jain leaders at the end of the nineteenth century. To him the exact details of Jain practice and belief were crucial and he could not discard such issues for the sake of integration between the divisions and sub-divisions within Jainism. If he was concerned about the future survivial of Jainism, he certainly did not see increased leniency in belief and practice as the solution to the crisis.

Ātmārāmjī wrote several books about Jainism. An important work was the *Tattvanirṇayaprāsāda*, published in 1902, the contents of which are described in the next chapter. In the context of defining Jainism, Ātmārāmjī discussed some of the basic questions of religious authority that have occupied Jain writers through history. One such question is the relationship between eternal and revealed truth and the power of the human mind to reach the highest levels of realization. He pointed out that the Veda was not the word of God (*īśvarokta*).[61] For Jain teachers, man was

[58] Vijayānaṃdasūri (Ātmārāmjī) *Samyaktvaśalyoddhāra*.
[59] Schubring (1962), 65.
[60] Vijayānaṃdasūri (Ātmārāmjī). (1888).
[61] Vijayānaṃdasūri (Ātmārāmjī), *Tattvanirṇayaprāsāda*, rev. Vallabha Vijayajī, p. 280.

the final authority, not a god. This has, of course, been the stance of Jainism and Buddhism against the Brahminical tradition since their origins. But as seen earlier, questions of authority took on a new significance during the nineteenth century. Was Ātmārāmjī part of the general movement in which the power of the individual to realize religion came into focus and the authority of religious specialists was questioned? Ātmārāmjī's writings testify that he in no way espoused Protestant attitudes. For Ātmārāmjī the Jain monk was the religious expert par excellence and laypeople must accept his interpretation of their tradition.

In many ways, then, Ātmārāmjī was a more old-fashioned character than Vijaya Dharma, Dharmapāla, or Vivekānanda. But at the same time it must be emphasized that his somewhat reactionary mind worked within the same epistemological framework as other central intellectual and religious figures of the time. Most importantly, his view of Jainism was an historicist vision. He saw Jainism as a community with a particular development and his expositions of the principles of Jainism were often based on history. Practices and beliefs were historically conditioned and the whole of Jainism could be summed up as the historical development of such practices and beliefs.

Ātmārāmjī's vast knowledge of Jain doctrine made him the obvious person to represent Jainism at the World Parliament of Religions. However, being of a conservative disposition Ātmārāmjī refused to break the rule against travel over the ocean and answered the organizer of the Parliament that he could not come in person, but that he would send a young man called Virchand R. Gandhi in his place. With Gandhi taking part in the Parliament in Chicago, Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism came together in more than one sense. 'My brothers and sisters of America: I greet you in the name of India and her three hundred millions of sons and daughters.'[62] Thus, Virchand R. Gandhi started one of his speeches in the US, using the very same words that Vivekānanda had used to address the public at the Parliament a little earlier. Indeed, Gandhi's representation of Jainism to the public of the US owes more to Vivekānanda than to the person on whose behalf he had come to Chicago. Gandhi constantly talked of himself as a Hindu and a Jain, sometimes in the same sentence, and he made it clear

[62] *Speeches and Writings of Virchand R. Gandhi*, ed. Bhagu F. Karbhari, 194.

that he had come to the West on behalf of India as a whole. For instance, he described the wedding ceremony of the Hindus in detail. No Hindu woman had ever sought divorce, he said. Gandhi was eager to refute the impression of the position of Indian women current in the West.[63] His attitude was very prominent at the time, but it was not the attitude of Ātmārāmjī, who was concerned with the minute details of orthodox Jain practice and the definition of right Jainism in opposition to both wrong Jainism and wrong religions like Hinduism.

From the US Gandhi went to London, where he got his first Western disciple of Jainism: Herbert Warren. Warren later wrote a book about Jainism based on notes and speeches of Gandhi.[64] The book was an attempt to summarize the cosmology and anthropology of Jainism and to present the lay ethic of Jainism in a lucid manner. Although Warren's book was lacking in scholarship—it never pretended to be based on philological erudition—Jacobi praised it for taking the layman's view and for showing that Jainism was an ethical religion.[65]

[63] Ibid. 229 ff. [64] Warren (1912). [65] Ibid. p. vii.

6

History, Archaeology, and the Politics of Religion

The transformation in religious identity among Śvetāmbara Jains in the nineteenth century went hand in hand with increasing demands for reform in the Jain population to counter internal problems in the community and to position the Jains in relation to other groups. Many Jain leaders felt that the community faced serious challenges to its continued survival and growth and internal reform was one important remedy for the negative development. Typically, reform meant abolishing boundaries that divided Jains into Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras and a number of different sects. Unity was a catchword. On the external level, leaders sought to establish Jainism as a quintessential Indian religion that preserved the most valuable aspects of ancient Indian culture. Jainism's preoccupation with non-violence was often emphasized in this respect. Many tried to prove that Jainism was older than Buddhism, which was seen as a potential rival in the negotiation for prime historical status. Both history and archaeology took on a new and weighty meaning in debates. As this chapter examines, several Jain leaders were immersed in historical and archaeological arguments over the position of Jainism in India and they often entered into alliances with Western Jain researchers if findings corroborated their own viewpoints.

THE PROSPECT OF EXTINCTION

As suggested in the discussion of the impact of the British census report, there was a feeling among Jains that their religion was in decline and their community in the process of dwindling away. While the Hindu and Muslim populations were growing steadily, the number of Indians registered as Jains fell during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The anxiety that the Jain religion was

threatened with extinction continued and grew into the twentieth century. J. E. Cort has given an account of a conference of Jains held at Sujangadh in January 1915. Here, one of the resolutions of the conference was made in response to the official censuses, calling for positive steps to reverse the decline in the Jain population.[1]

Another illustration of the fear of extinction is provided by the many notes and articles about the state of Jainism that appeared in the *Jain Gazette* in the first decades of the twentieth century. The decline of Jainism and the call to reverse the trend were recurrent themes in the journal, which boasted of reaching 13,000,000 Jains (undoubtedly an unrealistic number), as well as many scholars and others in the West. For instance, in July 1924 the gazette had an article called 'Decreasing Jain Population'. In November 1925 there appeared another long article about the threat to Jainism by the editor, J. L. Jaini. He said that 'The Census Report shows us that the Jains have decreased in numbers during the last generation.'[2] The writer then listed the relevant census-numbers and concluded that if the appropriate steps were not taken, 'the Jains will go out of existence eighteen decades hence'.[3]

Of course, 1925 is three decades later than the general time-focus of this study. However, Jaini had established his journal by 1900 and although I have not had access to the earlier issues of the journal, it seems very likely that the editor had perceived the Jains as a group on the brink of extinction from the beginning and that he had tried to convey this perception to his readers. The *Jain Gazette* was, as the editor pointed out, started as the mouthpiece of the All India Jain Association. This was the organization that was established in 1899 under the name Jain Young Mens' Association and changed its name to All India Jain Association in 1910. The influence from Christian organizations was clear from its name. The central goal of the All India Jain Association was the unification of the different strands of Jainism; according to its spokesmen, the greatest threat to the Jain population was its lack of unity. As Jaini put it,

> It is sickening to study the constitution of the community. In addition to the two broad divisions of Digambara and Swetambaras, we have numerous subdivisions and subcastes. . . . The number of subsects seems to increase in inverse proportion to the decrease in the population. . . . It is the

[1] Cort (1995), 11. [2] *Jaina Gazette*, Nov. 1925, 330. [3] Ibid.

most important duty of the Association to see that union is brought about between the various sects and subsects of the community. Without union it is impossible to achieve anything.[4]

Unification, on several levels, was another recurrent theme in the *Jain Gazette* from 1924 and, almost certainly, from its appearance in 1900. First of all, the two main divisions of Jains must unite to make the Jain community strong and fit, according to numerous concerned articles. The next steps were to be the unification of Jains and Hindus, then Hindus and Muslims, and so on till the whole of humanity was united. Education, ban on child marriage, and lifting of the ban on inter-caste and inter-sectarian marriage were also important measures to avoid extinction, many argued. A cardinal point for Jaini was the fact that the Jains constitute a separate and distinct community and, therefore, must assert themselves as such.[5] The *Jain Gazette* was a tool for spreading the new perception of a Jain community.

If we move into the twentieth century, we recognize the same themes in the debate on Jain society. One example is V. Sangave's sociological study first published in 1959, which was deeply concerned with the fate of Jainism. 'Since the Middle Ages the Jains are declining day by day in number and their influence is continuously waning. If the same process continues it is likely that the Jain community will have to face total extinction within a period of few centuries.'[6]

Deficiency of females in the population, early marriage and complications of child-birth, high mortality rates for females, and a ban on widow remarriage all contributed to this decline, Sangave said. Persecution by Muslims and Hindu sectarians since the Middle Ages was also an important factor. The Jains had lost their ability to convert, while they themselves had been the target for intense proselytization. To make the Jain community grow various measures would have to be adopted without delay, Sangave argued.[7] Child-marriage had to be stopped to improve women's health, the ban on widow remarriage had to be lifted, and Jain men should be able to marry women from all Jain castes as well as from outside the Jain community. 'Along with this the proselytizing activity will have to be undertaken . . . It means that the Jains will

[4] Ibid. 330, 331, 334. [5] Ibid. 334. [6] Sangave (1959), 385.
[7] Ibid. 392.

have to adopt the same intense missionary zeal displayed by the illustrious Jain Āchāryas throughout the ancient and medieval period in India and possibly outside.'[8]

Here, a sociologist is prescribing in the 1950s many of the same measures deemed necessary in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is clear that certain of the anxieties that first appeared in the nineteenth century have continued up to the present.

'JAINS ARE TRUE HINDUS': THE POLITICS OF PHILOLOGY

It has been described how the comparative religion of Max Müller, and the Western historical and philological study of religion in general, had real existential significance for South Asian leaders like Vivekānanda and Dharmapāla. The scholarly literature on the antiquity and historical status of different religions became existentially important to Jain leaders too. As a consequence, the scholars who contributed to the debate became friends or enemies. Moreover, many Jain leaders contributed to the debate both by writing their own articles and by assisting Western scholars in their search for material in Jain libraries.

In 1909 the eminent Jain leader Vijaya Dharma Sūri attended a congress of religion in Calcutta and his exposition of the Jain doctrine at this conference was printed under the title *Jainatattva-digdarśana*. This is a small book the aim of which was to establish the essence of Jainism in a clear way. It was first of all an exposition of Jain doctrines. However, the book also illustrates how religious leaders were engaged by the new questions concerning the history of their religion as a distinct tradition. In this book Vijaya Dharma engaged in the debate to establish the position of Jainism vis-à-vis other religions in India. Buddhism was the primary threat to the status of Jainism and Vijaya Dharma quoted Jacobi to show that Jainism was a completely independent and original religious system.[9] He also quoted J. Hertel, another noted indologist, to show that Jain literature was of a higher quality than that of the Buddhists.[10]

[8] Sangave (1959), 393. [9] Vijaya Dharma Sūri (1920), 42. [10] Ibid. 7.

Ātmārāmjī, the Jain leader invited to the Parliament in Chicago, was also concerned with questions of historical relations and status, and he was eager to position Jainism in relation to other religious systems. In the massive work *Tattvanirṇayaprāsāda* he discussed the relationship between Jainism and Buddhism, taking as his point of departure the assumption that Jainism was a branch of Buddhism.[11] Ātmārāmjī pointed out that Jainism was, first, different (*bhinna*) from Buddhism and, secondly, older (*prācīna*) than its rival. Like Vijaya Dharma Sūri he referred to the work of scholars like Jacobi and Max Müller to support this view. The prominent Jain leaders of the period were concerned about the history of their religious tradition in a purely European and historicist sense.

The *Tattvanirṇayaprāsāda* is primarily a text that seeks to define what Jainism is. It does this not by presenting Jainism as a philosophical system, but by a more sociological approach, that is, by looking at its relation to other religions and by describing in detail the life of the layperson with its vows and its rites of passage. A large portion of the text, approximately 100 pages out of over 700, is devoted to such rites, which were largely modelled on the Hindu rituals. In this sense, Ātmārāmjī continued a tradition in which monks felt that it was their duty to define religion and the role played by laypeople. However, in the nineteenth century, writing rules for the laity had taken on a new significance. The question of origins was now the most essential of all considerations. Leading monks believed that lay Jains should know what Jainism was, in both a doctrinal and an historical sense, in order to identify with it. Ātmārāmjī's book was written in simple Hindi, it was published, and it contributed to a communal discourse that was wide open and accessible in a way that the traditional literature on the conduct of the laity was not.

However, the definition of a new Jain identity was not left to conservative monks like Ātmārāmjī. The lay-leader Lala Benarsi Das is an excellent example of a layperson who was fervently engaged in the key issues of communal and religious history. In a lecture on Jainism held in 1901, he hoped to establish the historical relationship between Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. His first step was to destroy the idea that Jainism was a branch of Buddhism

[11] *Tattvanirṇayaprāsāda*, rev. Vallabha Vijayajī, 535–9.

by a detailed and learned exposition of the arguments of contemporary scholarship. Indologists like Wilson, Lassen, Weber, and others had done the Jains great injustice by seeing the religion as an offshoot of Buddhism, he said.[12] The only way they could be forgiven was by seeing that their conclusions were due to haste. They never cared to study the antiquity of Jainism in the light of Jain, Buddhist, and Brahminical texts, Benarsi Das complained. Jainism was different and older than Buddhism, and he was grateful to scholars like Jacobi and Bühler for their discoveries which demonstrated the antiquity of the religion. They had saved Jainism from dependence on Buddhism, but, he continued, they had also created a new conflict when they said that Jainism was a product of Brahminism. There was no such thing in ancient India as one dominant system from which all others borrowed. Indeed, borrowing had no place in India, he asserted. Instead there were a large number of different and independent philosophers. Among these were the forefathers of all Indian religions, Jainism included. Jainism owed nothing to ancient Buddhism or to Brahminism. In a way, then, Benarsi Das's argumentation contained a paradox. He was concerned—like all other religious leaders of the period—with the origins of his creed and he wished to anchor Jainism in a remote past out of reach of anybody who wanted to include or overcode the religion. However, he rejected the scientific method of Western indologists, or linguists in general for that matter, that sought to trace the origins of a tradition by following the branches back towards some proto-entity—the source of all religion.

In spite of this Benarsi Das believed that Jains were Hindus. This view reminds us of the double identity discussed earlier. However, the way Benarsi Das attempted to establish an etymological link between Hinduism and Jainism was original.

> Gentlemen, remember we are Hindus. We are the descendants of those who were Hindus or from whom *him* or *himsa* was *du* or *dur*, i.e. away; (*him* = *himsa* and *du* = *dur*, i.e. away.) Hindus were not those who lived on the banks of the river Indus. Hindus were those from whom *himsa* was away.... Let us be true Hindus or Jains.[13]

[12] Benarsi Das (1902), 20. [13] Ibid. 75.

Here Benarsi Das refers to the widespread view that the name Hindu derives from the Persian designation of the people who lived beyond or on the banks of the great Indus river. He rejected the idea that Hindu simply should denote the inhabitants of a geographical area. Instead, he offered his own ingenious, quasi-scientific explanation of the word, according to which the good moral qualities of the Hindu people were the source of their communal name. The essence of Hinduism was non-violence and the Jains were the foremost proponents of *ahiṃsā*. Therefore, the Jains were the foremost carriers of that which was most valuable in the Hindu tradition.

For Jain leaders philology and history provided many of the central arguments in the politics of religious identity in the nineteenth century. But classical texts were not the only place to look for proof of the antiquity and historical independence of Jainism. It has been seen how the Buddhist leader Dharmapāla was obsessed with the ancient Buddhist centres of Bengal. Archaeological sites acquired a new political significance for Jains too.

THE POLITICS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

In January 1812, during his journey in the Patna district, Francis Buchanan visited Pāvā, which he described in some detail in his journal.[14] On his way to Pāvā he met two groups of Jain pilgrims on a tour of various holy places. He noted that there were three principal places of worship there for the Jains. The most important one was a temple of considerable size which marked the site on which Mahāvīra, the founder of the religion, had died. The temple itself was in excellent repair and of no great antiquity, according to Buchanan. Similarly, the two other temples that he took to be of importance were recently erected and in good repair. Surrounding the biggest temple there was a court which was clean and planted with flowers. There were altogether three buildings intended to accommodate visitors in the court, one of which was 'intended entirely for the accommodation of pilgrims of rank'.[15] It is evident that in 1812 Pāvā was a place of some activity and was not neglected to the same extent as Bodh Gayā, although both

[14] *Journal of Francis Buchanan* ed. Jackson, 105–8. [15] Ibid. 108.

Buchanan and other travellers reported seeing vast amounts of uncared for and broken Jain statues and temples—as well as Buddhist and Hindu remains—all over the Patna and Gayā districts. When Major M. Kittoe passed through the area thirty-five years later in an attempt to follow the footsteps of the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-Hien, he did not mention any religious activity in Pāvā or in Bodh Gayā.[16] This may well be due to his own lack of interest in the current state of religious affairs except to the extent that it revealed details of ancient history. Concerning 'the spot where Mahavira Swami died' he was 'inclined to think that it must have been one of sanctity to the Buddhists and Jains, which latter are, I believe merely a heretical offset'.[17] Kittoe blamed his hasty remarks on the terrible sun, which was causing him much suffering.

It seems that the importance of Pāvā grew with the spread of the perception of the Jains as a distinct community with a particular history and a historical person as its founder. In the archaeological survey of 1895 it was noted that one of the Jain temples at Pāvā 'was consecrated as recently as March 1894'.[18] Furthermore, two other temples had recently been restored, the survey said. In 1907 Vijaya Dharma went to Bengal, where he met many of the Bengali leaders of the time. During his stay there he started making arrangements for establishing a centre for instruction in Jainism (*gurukula*) at Pāvā, to commemorate the place where Mahāvīra had attained Nirvāṇa two-and-a-half millennia earlier. Vijaya Dharma was forced to return to Benares before he could carry out his plans for Pāvā. Instead, the religious centre was established at Palitana in Kathiawar, Gujarat.

Although the direct evidence is sparse, it seems that the place of Mahāvīra's death became the focus of a new Jain consciousness in a community that sought a special place in Indian history and geography. But Pāvā was certainly not the only place to undergo a transformation in religious and historical significance for the Jains during the last part of the nineteenth century. The birthplace of Mahāvīra also became the subject of a controversy in which the close links between European indology and the communal self-assertion of Jain leaders are evident.

[16] Kittoe (1847), 955, 964–5. [17] Ibid. 955.

[18] *List of Ancient Monuments in Bengal. . . up to 31 August 1895*, 274–5.

According to Jain texts, Mahāvīra was born in Kuṇḍagāma or Kuṇḍapura, where his father was a *Kṣatriya* by the name of Siddhārtha. According to the account of the *Kalpasūtra*, Mahāvīra first descended into the womb of the Brahmin woman Devānandā, who lived in the Brahmin part of Kuṇḍagāma. Then, however, it occurred to Śakra, king of the gods, that *Arhats* and *Cakravartins* cannot be born into a low, mean, poor, or degraded family, or into a Brahmin family, and he instructed Hariṇaigamaiṣin, the divine commander of the infantry, to carry out the necessary arrangements. The god transformed himself and descended to the human world, taking the embryo of the *Tīrthaṃkara* in his palm without hurting it, carrying it away to the Kṣatriya part of town, and placing it in the womb of the *Kṣatriya* woman Triśālā, wife of Siddhārtha.

So much for the legend of Mahāvīra's birth. Now where was Kuṇḍagāma? Both A. F. D. Hoernle and H. Jacobi believed that Kuṇḍagāma was really another name for Vaiśālī. Vaiśālī was one of the most important cities at the time of Buddha and Mahāvīra and, according to Hoernle, Vaiśālī occupied a very extensive area which included several villages in addition to Vaiśālī proper.[19] Among these villages were Vāṇiyagāma and Kuṇḍagāma. These villages still exist under the names of Bāniyā and Basukuṇḍ, Hoernle said. He believed the city to have consisted of three major areas and that the whole city could be called by any of the names of its constituent parts according to circumstances. In the *Kalpasūtra*, Kuṇḍapura is described as a large town with suburbs, just like Vaiśālī. However, Hoernle does not have very strong evidence on which to base his theory. In fact, there is nothing in the account of the *Kalpasūtra* to suggest that Kuṇḍapura is identical with Vaiśālī apart from its size or, to be more precise, the fact that it has suburbs.

Hoernle's assumption of the identity of Kuṇḍapura or Kuṇḍagāma was based on Jacobi's theory stated in the introduction to his translation of Jain *sūtras* in the series Sacred Books of the East.[20] Although Jacobi discussed the topic in some detail, the logic of his argument is simple: first, the Jains agree that Mahāvīra was born in Kuṇḍapura or Kuṇḍagāma. Secondly, Mahāvīra is described in one

[19] Hoernle's view is found in *Uvāsagadasao*, ed. and trans. Hoernle, 3–6, 8.
[20] See *Jaina Sūtras*, trans. Jacobi, pt. 1, p. xi.

text as Vesālie, or Vaiśālika, which is taken to mean that he was born in the city of Vaiśālī. From these two facts, Jacobi concludes that Kuṇḍapura or Kuṇḍagāma must be the same town as Vaiśālī. Not even a *Tīrthaṅkara* could have been born in two places.

Jacobi and Hoernle's hypothesis that Kuṇḍapura or Kuṇḍagāma was really a suburb of Vaiśālī and that the names could also be used to refer to the whole city is not altogether beyond criticism. Other solutions could solve the puzzle of the Vaiśālika epithet of Mahāvīra. One person who was not convinced by the eminent Western Jain scholars was the Jain leader Vijayendra Sūri. At the beginning of the twentieth century he wrote a book in order to refute the arguments of Jacobi and Hoernle.[21] Vijayendra Sūri was the biographer of Vijaya Dharma Sūri and just as his older contemporary had tried to strengthen the bonds of the Jain community to Mahāvīra's place of death, Vijayendra Sūri tried to clarify the historical significance of the last *Tīrthaṃkara's* birthplace.

Vijayendra Sūri's main goal in the book was to demonstrate that the textual, historical, and archaeological evidence all indicated that Kuṇḍapura and Vaiśālī were two different towns.[22] After concluding this early in the book, he went on to tackle the confused assertions of other scholars one by one, the most important of which was the idea that Kuṇḍagāma was a suburb of Vaiśālī.

The idea of history and archaeology in the thinking of Vijayendra Sūri—as well as Vijaya Dharma Sūri—was that of secularized historicist European thinkers. To Vijayendra Sūri history was a natural process of change undergone by societies, and the peculiarities of the history of a particular society could be understood through a systematic study of archaeology and literary sources. Naturally, religions must also be objects of the same kind of historical study, and the lives of the founders of religions must be studied just like the lives of other historical persons. Vijayendra Sūri's book on Vaiśālī was a work of historical research because his perception of religious history was a historicist perception. His methods conformed to those of Western indologists. He quoted passages from Jain and Buddhists texts, he referred to the Chinese travellers in India, and called for more archaeological excavations to test his ideas. This historical Mahāvīra was brought by

[21] Vijayendra Sūri (1921). [22] Ibid. 26.

European indologists, who already knew the historical Jesus and the historical Buddha in the same way as they knew Julius Caesar and Henry VIII.

But although Vijayendra Sūri undoubtedly had a genuine interest in history, there were other motives that played a part in his treatment of the subject of Mahāvīra's birthplace. Jacobi accused the Jain authors of the relevant *sūtras* of trying to make their readers believe that Kuṇḍagāma was a big town, and Mahāvīra's father Siddhārtha the powerful king of this town, in order to glorify the descent of the founder of Jainism.[23] Jacobi's accusation is not far-fetched. It is clear how the antiquity and the historical independence of Jainism as a system were primary issues for the discussion of Jainism's position in relation to other communities in India. Nationalist sentiment has often been a primary driving-force behind historical research in Europe and it would have been surprising if this were not the case in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India as well. Vijayendra Sūri said at the beginning of his book on Vaiśālī, he trusted that when the truth about the birthplace of Mahāvīra became known, the Jain community—after the necessary excavations had been carried out—would construct a large university and a pleasure grove at the spot. Archaeology and communal self-assertion would go hand in hand.

The politics of archaeology became an important force in the late nineteenth century and it did not abate in the twentieth. N. Balbir observes that it was excavations carried out in Hastinapur in the 1950s for an archaeological survey and the realization of the site's importance in pre-history that made the Jains take interest in the deserted and isolated spot.[24] In fact, it was from these events that Jain leaders like Vallabha Sūri got the idea of making Hastinapur into a Jain *tīrtha*, or place of pilgrimage.

RELIGIOUS CENTRES AND PILGRIMAGE

The Jain and Buddhist leaders considered in this book were obsessed with the ancient history of their creeds. However, this history was always seen in relation to the history of India as a

[23] *Jaina Sūtras*, trans. Jacobi, pt. 1, p. xi.
[24] Balbir (1990), 177.

whole. Both Jains and Buddhists sought their historical roots in the history of Magadha as described in ancient sources and in the archaeological sites of the Gayā district of Bengal. In other words, Bengal was seen as the historical centre and attempts to revive old links with this centre necessarily emphasized their links with Hindu India. The geographical situation at the heart of India had been lost for Jains and Buddhists and their histories had for centuries unfolded at the margins of the subcontinent: in the far western corner and in Sri Lanka respectively.[25] In the eyes of their religious leaders, Buddhists and Jains had been thrown out of the holy land by bloodthirsty Muslims or over-zealous Brahmins and they were presently relegated to the periphery of India both in terms of secular geography and in terms of sacred history.

From the 1890s certain leaders made efforts to change this state of affairs. The spiritual magnetism of Bodh Gayā, Sāñci, Pāvā, and Kuṇḍagāma focused their work and efforts. It has been argued that this fascination must be seen as a corollary of a secular perception of history inherited from Europe. But, one may object, these religious traditions do indeed have a place for the fascination with sacred sites: the pilgrimage. Would it not be possible to understand the life-projects of these people in the context of indigenous traditions of pilgrimage?

A. Morinis has defined pilgrimage as 'a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal'.[26] This broad definition enables one to see secular as well as religious journeys—both geographical and metaphorical ones—towards a special place or state as pilgrimages. However, something is lost in this general treatment. With Morinis's definition it would not be feasible to discover the fundamental differences between Dharmapāla's quest for Bodh Gayā and traditional Sinhalese Buddhist pilgrimage, or between Vijayendra Sūri's debate over Mahāvīra's birthplace and the traditional Jain occcupation with sites associated with one of the *Tīrthaṃkaras*. The obsession with ancient history and archaeology that took off among Indian religious leaders in the nineteenth century was an expression of a completely new world view.

[25] I am excluding Digambara Jains, who are centred in Southern India.
[26] Morinis (ed.) (1992), 3, 4.

Dharmapāla's quest for Bodh Gayā was not a pilgrimage in any traditional Sinhalese Buddhist sense of a religious journey. His zealous attempts to appropriate the Maha Bodhi temple made a claim about the place of Buddhism in Indian history in the same way as the activities of Vijayendra Sūri and Vijaya Dharma Sūri made claims about Jainism as a historical religious tradition. Bodh Gayā and Pāvā have, of course, been places of religious significance to Buddhists and Jains through history. In the Jain vocabulary, they were *Nirvāṇabhūmis*, places where the greatest of religious teachers attained *Nirvāṇa*. But for the religious leaders of the late nineteenth century, the Buddhist and Jain remains of Bihar were not in themselves endowed with any special supernatural powers. This does not mean that the feelings for them were less intense or less genuine than those of pilgrims driven by the quest for some sort of sacred empowerment or the gratification of prayers. Bodh Gayā, Sāñci, Pāvā, and Kuṇḍagāma were places of historical significance. They were not ruptures in the profane world where the other world peeked in, to use the language of the phenomenology of religion. Morinis has emphasized what he calls 'the collapse or cancellation of time and history that is so central to pilgrimage.'[27] This collapse is absent. On the contrary, history and time are emphasized.

[27] Ibid. 26.

Conclusion

The second half of the nineteenth century marked a radical disjunction in religious thinking in South Asia. The work and the ideas of the people looked at in this book cannot be understood in terms of traditional concepts from Bengali Hinduism, Sinhalese Buddhism, or Gujarati Jainism. There was a dramatic shift in the world view of indigenous Indian religion. At the end of the nineteenth century Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains were in the process of redefining what it meant to belong to their communities. They did this inside the parameters laid down by the English language, by European ideas of religion, European ideas of history, and European ideas of societies and nations. In the writings of Vivekānanda, Dharmapāla, Vijayendra Sūri, and Vijaya Dharma Sūri, we meet a world view that was not possible in India a century earlier because it presupposed the import and internalization of something as radical as a new epistemology built around these new concepts.

The development in ideas about the nature of religion had large implications for traditional forms of authority. Many of the new leaders insisted that the distinction between religious specialists—Brahmins or monks—and lay people had to be abandoned or toned down. Everybody should take part in the cultural heritage of the community. Everybody should have access to the high scriptural tradition. Everybody should essentially be a Brahmin or a monk. Religious identity in traditional Brahminical religion was ascribed by birth and exclusive to certain members of society, whereas religious membership in the order of monks, both Buddhist and Jain, was achieved through initiation and in principle, though not always in practice, was open to anybody. To repeat the argument made in the introduction, there appeared a new idea of membership in the religious community. The new type of religious identity was ascribed by birth and inclusive of all members of society.

But while it is clear that the nineteenth century marked a pronounced disjunction, we cannot understand modern South

Asian religions without acknowledging that there were great differences in the extent to which the new movements contained elements of continuity. There was a difference of degree between the Hindu Vivekānanda, the Buddhist Dharmapāla, and the Jain Vijaya Dharma Sūri regarding their internalization and espousal of new versus traditional world views. Dharmapāla was undoubtedly the most anglicized of these religious leaders and his break with the Buddhist past was radical, although he would have denied this himself. Of those examined, he was probably also the leader who made the most profound and lasting impact on his own society. Dharmapāla contributed substantially to the transformation of religious roles in Sinhalese society both by legitimizing the political involvement of monks and by encouraging the lay person's striving for the highest religious goals and ideals. Gombrich and Obeyesekere have looked at the legacy of Dharmapāla in the late twentieth century; their conclusion is that Buddhism has been tranformed by the new ideas of religious authority and by the new and unprecedented religious roles of monks and lay people.[1] One of the reasons why Dharmapāla was influential in the shaping of modern Sinhalese Buddhism was that the Sinhalese society was quite small compared to India or even Bengal and the colonial situation had a very profound impact on Sinhalese society. For instance, the institutionalized relationship between royal power and the order of monks collapsed with the Kandyan state in 1815 and this created a fertile ground for religious reform. However, Dharmapāla's lasting influence is also felt outside Sri Lanka. His work in India resulted in an awareness in the Buddhist world of the importance of the ancient Buddhist sites in Bengal-Bihar, and the Maha Bodhi Society, the organization he created for the establishment of Buddhism in India, today has branches in several countries and plays a role in the worldwide propagation of Buddhism.

Like Dharmapāla, Vivekānanda was also thoroughly influenced by English culture through his education, and his idea of the Indian past was conveyed through European books on history and religion. However, at the same time Vivekānanda's religious yearning was expressed within a traditional context of renunciation and meditation. As T. Raychaudhuri puts it, he was more than anything else a mystic in quest of the ultimate reality within

[1] Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988).

a specific Indian tradition.[2] Vivekānanda was, despite his Western conception of history and religion, securely rooted in pre-colonial tradition to an extent that Dharmapāla was not. To put it differently, Dharmapāla was far more culturally alienated than Vivekānanda. Part of the reason is to be found in the influence of the very different teachers that formed their outlook at an early stage in their careers. The young Vivekānanda was able to tap the mystical and devotional theistic tradition of Bengal through Ramakrishna, while the young Dharmapāla was taught the occult doctrines of the theosophists.

Vivekānanda had a deep effect on his countrymen through his gifts as a speaker and his success as a preacher in the West. The lasting legacy of Vivekānanda's work may be seen in the activities and status of the organizations that he founded. He established societies for the study of the Vedānta teaching both in California and in New York and his preaching in America made him famous. However, the organization significant to India was the Ramakrishna Mission, which was established by Vivekānanda in 1897. The Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Order (Math) have engaged in both religious and social work throughout the country, although their greatest impact has been in Bengal. Outside India the main focus of the organization has been to spread the Vedānta teaching; in 1980 there were 119 centres in India and abroad.[3] Through the Ramakrishna Mission and Order, Vivekānanda, and to some extent Ramakrishna himself, play a distinct part in religious and intellectual life in Bengal today.

It is more difficult to assess the legacy of the Jain leaders presented in this book. One reason is that the study of Jainism in the nineteenth century has not come very far; knowledge of the impact of colonialism among the Jains of Gujarat is vastly inferior to knowledge of these issues in Bengal and Sri Lanka. The dialogue between Jain leaders and Western scholars was clearly important in opening up Jainism as a field of historical and sociological inquiry. Efforts to establish schools for the study of Jainism and societies for the preservation of old texts have contributed to creating an awareness of Jainism as a distinct religious tradition and Jains as a distinct community. In my opinion, the nineteenth century marked as clear a disjunction in the religious outlook of Jains as it did for

[2] Raychaudhuri (1988), 230. [3] Gambhirananda (1957), 338.

Hindus and Buddhists, and their arguments were thoroughly influenced by the historicist ideology of Western research and by the objectifying stance of the British census.

In more general terms, the new role of religion generated in the nineteenth century had important implications for political life in South Asia in the twentieth century. For instance, a large number of scholarly works have shown how political monks played a pivotal part in the legitimation of violent communal conflicts in both India and Sri Lanka during the last decades. The Indian sub-continent is where nationalism and religion have found their most complex field of interaction, A. Embree has asserted.[4] Naturally, I agree with P. Van der Veer that religious discourse and practice must be treated as constitutive of changing social identities rather than ideological smoke screens.[5] To be more specific, there is no doubt that religious nationalist ideology has been a cause of political turmoil in South Asia in recent times.

This is not to say that the people looked at in this book would have espoused violence. On the contrary, the kinds of engagement in public life that these leaders called for were charitable work and spreading the basic messages of their respective traditions through writing and lecturing. Their work resulted in the founding of schools for the education of the young, hospitals for the sick and poor, and missions and retreats in many countries. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the conceptual shift in ideas of religion described in this book was a precondition for later types of religious nationalism and communalism in South Asia.

[4] Embree (1990), 15. [5] Van der Veer (1994) p. ix.

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